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‘A SOURCE OF INNOCENT MERRIMENT

IN AN OBJECT ALL SUBLIME’:

A CRITICAL APPRAISAL OF

THE CHORAL WORKS

OF

SIR ARTHUR SULLIVAN

By

PAUL GEOFFREY ANDERSON

M.A., F.L.C.M., F.R.S.A.

Thesis submitted for the degree of Master of Music  
Durham University

Department of Music

2015

## ABSTRACT

### ‘A Source of Innocent Merriment in an Object All Sublime’: A Critical Appraisal of the Choral Works of Sir Arthur Sullivan

PAUL GEOFFREY ANDERSON

Thesis submitted for the degree of Master of Music, Durham University 2015.

This thesis seeks to give a full assessment of a surprisingly and much neglected area of academic research – the choral music of Sir Arthur Sullivan – over a period of 36 years from *Kenilworth* (1864) to the setting of the *Te Deum* (1900), written during the Boer War and the year of his death. Although not extensive, the list of Sullivan's choral works reveals that he was not only drawn to the idiom of choral music but that he exercised no less of his creative imagination in their gestation and performance than he did in his more famous and exalted theatrical works. Indeed the list exhibits an impressive variety of sub-genres ranging from the masque, the *Te Deum*, the oratorio and the sacred drama to the dramatic cantata. Here the originality and coherence of these works are assessed analytically and critically within the context of the development of Sullivan's career (with particular emphasis on his conductorship of the Leeds Triennial Festival) and the composer's style. In addition the works are studied in conjunction with an appraisal of Sullivan's own particular brand of eclecticism, his creative approach to choral forms, and his instinctive empathy with the stage in which we see an individual *mélange* of Teutonic influences (of Schubert, Mendelssohn, Schumann and, later, early Wagner), those of the French (namely Offenbach and Gounod) and Italian theatres (Rossini, Donizetti and Verdi), not to mention the impact of English dramatic music and of Sullivan's own Savoy operas. Indeed, one of the central elements of the thesis examines the very aesthetic nature of the choral works within the perspective of Sullivan's dramatic predilections and, notwithstanding the self-evident differences between choral music and opera, to what extent his choral music crossed the boundaries of these dissimilar idioms. Finally, the choral works are also considered within the controversial and complex context of Sullivan's own reception among his peers and critics, and how his role as an 'outsider' and as a composer who 'squandered his talents' affected the perception of his 'serious' works within a choral world dominated by Teutonic symphonic values.



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## INTRODUCTION

At various moments throughout his life, Sir Arthur Sullivan was called upon to write the kind of choral works that were a staple of the Victorian musical scene. Such works were written for the great Metropolitan Musical Festivals as well as for particular State occasions and were, for the most part, deemed to be exactly what was required from a composer of serious standing in Victorian society. By the time that Sullivan was required to do such writing, there had been a long tradition of worthy, though not exceptional, academic musicians who had written oratorio and cantata for festivals and special occasions, mostly all following in the line established by Handel and Mendelssohn. For his part, Sullivan, in his attempt to have himself considered among the ranks of 'serious' composers entered the world of choral commissions with both enthusiasm and vigour. The results of his efforts in the field, however, do not fit happily into the Handel tradition or to the Mendelssohn inheritance: traditions which British choral societies adopted with such alacrity. Indeed, Sullivan appears to have approached the entire idiom of cantata and oratorio in a manner which cut across the accepted aesthetic imperatives. He, as a study of the scores of his choral works proves, could not avoid being a man of the theatre, and those elements of Italian and French opera which he assimilated were deeply imbibed to the point where contemporary German processes, notably those of Brahms and Wagner, were largely rejected. His works written in collaboration

with W.S. Gilbert, known generically as the 'Savoy' operas and considered by most people to be his best compositional efforts, cannot be considered and approached as in opera generally - the be-all-and-end-all of the work - because the libretto in a musical work is usually seen as being merely a conduit to musical composition and more often than not regarded as subservient to the music which ultimately stems from it. But, in the case of the Savoy operas, the contribution of the librettist is every bit as vital as the work of the composer because of Sullivan's methods of working with lyrics. To a large extent, all this is also true for the texts of the sacred and secular choral works. It is quite clear that Sullivan's songs and concerted pieces command attention as the product of a cultivated mind, although they do not use any particular developmental form and are almost entirely dictated by the words and by melody. As Hughes has remarked:

Even in Sullivan's oratorios and cantatas one notices the same curious detachment [as in the Savoy Operas] where the human voice is concerned. There are no great demands on technique or virtuosity - bel canto and gymnastics are alike eschewed - but neither is there much that encourages a singer to give of his best. Santley, Edward Lloyd, Albani and Ben Davies took all this in their strides and never worried the composer with niggling questions about compass or tessitura but they might have been forgiven for doubting whether their talents were being displayed to full advantage. Small wonder then that Sullivan, while he was always glad to let unknown and inexperienced artists have a chance to make their name at the Savoy, did not go out of his way to write them parts that would enable them to do themselves justice. His main concern was not the singer, but the song.<sup>1</sup>

On many occasions, apart from the meaning and content of the lyrics, there is no difference between Sullivan's operatic writing (light or serious) and his writing for the serious choral works, either in form, melodic style or method of orchestration.

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<sup>1</sup> Hughes, G., *The Music of Arthur Sullivan* (Macmillan and Co.: London, 1960), 95

The best and most impressive moments in a Sullivan work appear to be whenever the composer has a dramatic incident or situation to illustrate in his music. In spite of this, Hughes says that 'although Sullivan earned most of his living and nearly all his present-day reputation by writing music for the stage, he had curiously little sense of drama'.<sup>1</sup> This is clearly not true. Hughes is scathing (though the scope of his critical acumen is decidedly limited) in his assessment of Sullivan in that he appears to believe that most of the exciting moments in Sullivan's works offer the listener 'nothing more original than emphatic diminished 7ths that are either tremolando or "blasting" - many of the terrific climaxes in Verdi's *Othello* (including the murder of Desdemona) are based on the same discredited chord, but Sullivan uses the routine so freely that it soon loses all force and degenerates to a threadbare theatrical convention. The occasions on which he land marks a dramatic situation with conviction applying his full resource, could probably be counted on the fingers of one hand.'<sup>2</sup> This somewhat simplistic appraisal greatly underestimates Sullivan's harmonic palette and of his capacity to handle technical apparatus. Moreover, it completely ignores (almost blindly) Sullivan's natural prowess for dramaturgy, the understanding of gesture, timing and characterization, which he possessed abundantly.

Instances of the composer's theatrical instincts can also be found in his cantatas and his one major oratorio, though in these contexts we observe Sullivan

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<sup>1</sup> Hughes, 142.

<sup>2</sup> Hughes, 142.

working in an idiom where the exigencies of drama, impact, *anagnorisis* and *peripeteia* are tempered by the imperatives of choral music, i.e. where the role of the chorus, by no means the most pliable of dramatic agencies, *has* to be considered together with the soloists. In examining the choral works, therefore, we are required to examine Sullivan's abilities in an environment where he had to plough his own artistic furrows and attempt to solve his own aesthetic problems.

This thesis attempts to assess the importance of a neglected area of Sullivan's output. Given the ubiquity and world-wide popularity of his satirical 'Savoy' operettas, the composer's choral works have been largely ignored, and much of this, even now, has to do with a stylistic shift which took place during Sullivan's lifetime. One view was that the entire process of composition came too easily to him and that his commitment to choral music, hymns, opera or any other idiom was not wholehearted. In a review of Herbert Sullivan's biography of his uncle, a critic of the *Musical Times* made an interesting observation about Sullivan when he stated that:

Some part of his mind was not really engaged. Or how could he, so acute and brilliant a man, have taken up for his most serious efforts subjects that have no genuine interest for him? He did not learn Wagner's lesson - that the artist had best be engrossed to the last shred of his being in his subject. We cannot believe that the essential Sullivan was wholly engaged in 'The Martyr of Antioch' 'The Golden Legend' and 'Ivanhoe'. He worked at those scores with more intensity than at the comic operas. There was more scope for technique. But the manner of approach was much the same. In the inmost Sullivan there cannot have been any more response to the wan and third-rate rouse of Longfellow's and Sturgis's poems than to Gilbert's *Katisha* and *Fairy Queen*.<sup>2</sup>

Yet Alexander Mackenzie (who was, after all, a contemporary), in a series of famous

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<sup>2</sup> *Musical Times* (Jan 1928). 42

lectures which he gave on Sullivan, thought exactly the opposite, citing that in Sullivan's choice of *The Golden Legend* as a subject for musical setting 'a subject was hit upon containing exactly that human touch which so well fitted the genius he has undoubtedly exhibited in its treatment'.<sup>3</sup> Clearly there were opposing views by his contemporaries. But added to this suspicion that engagement with his subjects could be qualified was the view that a substantial musical gift had been squandered. The Bradford musician, Samuel Midgley, who studied in Leipzig (and later founded the Bradford Permanent Orchestra), recalled in his memoirs, *My 70 Years' Musical Memories 1860-1930*, that the prevailing view among his Leipzig teachers (and those who had taught Sullivan in the 1860s) was that he had not achieved his full potential:

In that unfortunate period, English music was decidedly "in the dumps," and it was not pleasant to hear it continually slighted and disparaged. Earlier on in my year at the Conservatorium [1874], Mr Leach had sent me a copy of Sullivan's "Light of the World," which had just been produced at the 1873 Birmingham Festival. I showed it to Dr Papperitz, one of my teachers, who took it home to look through. When he brought it back, he asked me to play over some of the numbers, and we had a long talk about it. He was disappointed with the work, and thought it unworthy of the young composer, who, a few years earlier, had shown, during his studies at Leipzig, a real genius for composition.<sup>4</sup>

Papperitz based his criticism on the idea that commerce and composition did not mix:

"But you Englishmen, who come here and show such promise, become utterly spoiled when you get back to commercial England," Dr Papperitz complained. "Compare Sullivan with Brahms. Of the two I think Sullivan had the greater natural musical talent; but Brahms will not write a note he doesn't think worthy of his gift, and after he had been acclaimed by Schumann as successor to Beethoven, and could

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<sup>3</sup> Mackenzie, A. C., *Life works of Arthur Sullivan* (London, 551).

<sup>4</sup> Midgley, S., *My 70 Years' Musical Memories (1860-1930)* (Novello: London, n.d.), 21.

command big money for his work, he quietly retired into a country place, where for two years he diligently studied how to improve his style, so as to be able to perfectly express the musical thoughts that surged within him. As for Sullivan," he went on, "he settles in London, and writes and publishes things quite unworthy of his genius. He is petted by royalty, mixes in aristocratic circles, and acquires expensive tastes which oblige him to prostitute his talents for money-making works. As a consequence, his musical ideas become more common, his modes of expression deteriorate, and England and the world are robbed of the fruit of his God-given gifts."<sup>5</sup>

This was a view commonly shared among Sullivan's contemporaries, one which had crystallised increasingly after Austro-German music became a dominant force in British musical pedagogy, not only with the presence of such as Dannreuther, Richter and Joachim, but also with such indigenous personalities as Stainer (who succeeded Sullivan after his unhappy time as Principal of the National Training School), Parry and Stanford (who taught composition at the newly-founded Royal College of Music) and Frederic Corder, a champion of Wagner (at the Royal Academy of Music). Two other figures, George Macfarren (an older contemporary) and Eduard Hanslick described Sullivan as the 'Offenbach of England', a comment which Stanford recognised with qualification as 'no bad compliment to his cleverness or versatility, but prompted by a desire, in the one case, probably, to veil a disappointment, and in the other, undoubtedly to point a satire.'<sup>6</sup>

Even though Sullivan's music remained universally popular, the musical establishment (with the exception of Mackenzie) took a dim view of Sullivan's example. Stanford, who was full of praise for Sullivan's incidental music to *The*

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 21-2.

<sup>6</sup> Stanford, C. V., 'Sullivan's *Golden Legend*' in *Studies and Memories* (Archibald Constable & Co.: London, 1908), 162.

*Tempest* (an admiration widely held), *Kenilworth* and *The Golden Legend*, was nevertheless dismissive of Sullivan's other works. When *The Golden Legend* was produced at Leeds in 1886, he commented that it was 'awaited with an impatience which betokened good hopes, not perhaps untinged by anxiety.'<sup>7</sup> Stanford, who was not one to prevaricate, even went as far as to declare that 'if the years intervening since the production of the *Tempest* music in 1862 and the cantata of *Kenilworth* at the Birmingham festival of 1864 had been obliterated from the composer's musical life, the musical world would have welcomed *The Golden Legend* as a natural sequel and a genuine artistic advance upon his two admirable early works.'<sup>8</sup> And Stanford pushed his point home in his usual outspoken manner by proclaiming that:

After winning his spurs with ease by the production of these two cantatas, Sir Arthur Sullivan turned his attention principally to a class of composition which, if always showing with unmistakable clearness the stamp of the musician's hand, was of a standard of art distinctly below the level of his abilities. If the world of music has to thank him for a purification of the operetta stage - no mean service in itself - it may still be permitted to regret that this much-needed reform was not carried out by a brain of smaller calibre and a hand less capable of higher work.<sup>9</sup>

In truth Stanford was able to offer, in the most part, some moderately balanced opinion of his perception of Sullivan's abilities, while one of Stanford's most fervent apologists, J. A. Fuller Maitland, could not hide his disparagement in his obituary of Sullivan in the *Cornhill Magazine* of 1901.<sup>10</sup> But the *coup de grâce* came with Ernest Walker's *A History of Music in England*, published in 1907, in which the view of Sullivan as a 'serious' composer and of the composer who 'might...have gone far, had

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid. 156.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 161.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 161-2.

<sup>10</sup> See Fuller Maitland, J. A., "Sir Arthur Sullivan", *Cornhill Magazine*, March 1901, 300-309.



he been endowed also with anything like a steadiness of ideal' were consolidated. Walker, a disciple of German musical ethics to the core, was damning of Sullivan's career (and damning with faint praise about the success of the Savoy operas which he attributed ungenerously solely to Gilbert's libretti); he dismissed works such as *The Martyr of Antioch* and *The Light of the World* as vulgar,<sup>11</sup> and was grudgingly appreciative of *The Golden Legend*. In truth, there was a clash of eras and aesthetic values and an uncompromising view of the musical world comparable with Leavis's later intractable view of English literature. It was impossible for Walker, a dyed-in-the wool Brahmsian and a believer that all music of real merit had to be 'serious', to appreciate light opera or of an Englishman who cleaved to an amalgam of (albeit 'reformed') French and Italian styles essentially rejected by England's new-found musical zeal. It was a view that persisted, *teste* Jack Westrup's third edition of the book in 1952 which did nothing to alter or revise Walker's initial stance.<sup>12</sup>

Yet, for all the invective to which Sullivan's music has been subjected, it is surprising that so little of it has benefited from any detailed analytical scrutiny. The recent *Cambridge Companion to Gilbert and Sullivan* has gone some way towards a technical, dramaturgical and aesthetic assessment of the skill that both men brought to the series of operettas for the Savoy Theatre, but other areas of Sullivan's output, largely ignored because of the overwhelming popularity of the operettas, have been completely neglected, perhaps because the view still prevails that works such as the

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<sup>11</sup> Walker, E., *A History of Music in England* (Clarendon Press: Oxford, 1907), 294.

<sup>12</sup> See Walker, E., *A History of Music in England* (Clarendon Press: Oxford, 1952; 3rd edn. ed. Westrup, J.), 325.

overtures or choral works are inferior. One of the principal aims of this thesis is to form a thorough appraisal of Sullivan's choral works with orchestra. Choral music clearly remained a major focus for the composer throughout his life. Five of the works produced in this idiom - *Kenilworth*, *On Shore and Sea*, *The Prodigal Son* the *Festival Te Deum* and *The Light of the World*, date from the first part of his career, between 1864 and 1873, at a time when the composer was forging his reputation. *The Martyr of Antioch* and *The Golden Legend* were written for Leeds where Sullivan was the festival's principal conductor and artistic director (between 1880 and 1899), and one of his very last works was the *Te Deum* written in anticipation of the forthcoming peace of the Boer War in 1900. That choral music was a genre that attracted Sullivan is also evident from the variety of works he composed for commissions, and that he clearly valued his position at Leeds (then, at the end of the nineteenth century, considered one of the 'blue riband' choral events of the nation along with Birmingham and the Three Choirs Festival) suggests that he not only enjoyed the challenge of conducting music for choir and orchestra but that he continued to take it seriously as a major distraction from his work in London theatres. In addition, this appraisal sets out to evaluate the nature of Sullivan's approach to music and words and to the nature of 'sub-genres' that he explored within the larger idiom. *Kenilworth*, his earliest choral work of 1864, is fashioned as a romantic reincarnation of an Elizabethan masque, while *On Shore and Sea* bears the title <sup>13</sup>'dramatic cantata'

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<sup>13</sup> It is interesting to note that *Trial By Jury* written four years later was also given this description. This is surprising, being a comic work written for the supposedly very different world of the theatre.

although it shares much in terms of its scene-setting with opera. Although the two settings of the *Te Deum* were written almost thirty years apart (i.e. 1872 and 1900) it seemed useful here to include both settings in the same chapter, since Sullivan brought different structural solutions to each work, and made use of his resources and the occasions for which they were written with some theatrical dexterity and imagination. Similarly it seemed appropriate to include both oratorical works, *The Prodigal Son* (1871) and *The Light of the World* (1873) in a chapter together, since each work explores a different type of aim; the former, a 'short' oratorio, develops a single narrative - that of the biblical parable - the latter, on a grandiose scale and obviously a work in which Sullivan wanted to assert his stature as a young and up-and-coming talent, a major study of the life of Christ. One thing is, however, evident, that Sullivan (contrary to some views) did not stint on the energy, ingenuity and care he placed in these works and there is little or no evidence to suggest that his heart was not in them. Chapter Four is devoted to a discussion of *The Martyr of Antioch* (1880), an interesting hybrid work which began life as a Leeds Festival Commission but, through its evident affinity with the stage and the interesting fusion of the sacred and secular of Milman's libretto, was also staged by the Carl Rosa Opera Company. Finally, in Chapter Five, there is a discussion of what is commonly regarded as Sullivan's most significant and venerated choral work, *The Golden Legend* (1886), also written for Leeds, which lies somewhere between an *opéra-manqué* and a secular cantata and which explores a musical idiom and manner somewhat more advanced in its greater adherence to German paradigms than his other choral works. An

investigation of this rich catalogue of contrasting works will, it is to be hoped, demonstrate that Sullivan's choral output is important both for its historical position (especially in the advance of English choral music in the 1860s and early 1870s) and its intrinsic musical significance.

One further important thread of the thesis's examination of these works will be one of style. As mentioned above, the influence of German models and symphonic imperatives was paramount in the formation of an English choral canon in the 1880s and 1890s, with such works as Parry's *Blest Pair of Sirens* (1887), the oratorio *Judith* (1888) and the Miltonic cantata *L'Allegro ed Il Pensieroso* (1890), and the same may be said of Stanford's pioneering setting of Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* in the *Elegiac Ode* of 1884, the oratorio *The Three Holy Children* (1885) and Tennyson's famous epic *The Revenge* (1886). Sullivan's more theatrical approach to choral music, in which the manner of French and Italianate arias (with their emphasis on simple lyricism) and choruses interact did not fit with the type of reverential earnestness established by such works as Brahms's *Ein Deutsches Requiem* and the emerging canon of Bach's choral works which was becoming the norm among his native contemporaries. Although exceptions exist (and these are identified in the discussion), Sullivan quite frequently did not distinguish between sacred and secular gesture and rhetoric, and even in some of the most 'pathetic' situations in his choral works, his instincts were driven by his love and affinity for the theatre. This often gave rise to a form of musical style which those in the musical establishment could not reconcile with their own normative aesthetic principles, and his direct response

to these moments of pathos and emotion, invariably misunderstood, often gave rise to derision and, as we have seen, invective of the most abusive kind. This thesis will attempt to redress that imbalance and, while acknowledging the polarised nature of much of the criticism that his works have endured - positive during the composer's lifetime and almost entirely negative after his death - a case will be made for Sullivan's choral works as individual artistic phenomena in their own right and works which deserve our attention every bit as much as the Savoy operas that continue to keep his name alive.

Paul Anderson

Hull

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# CHAPTER ONE:

## THE ROAD TO ORATORIO:

### *Kenilworth and On Shore and Sea*

The earliest of Sullivan's choral works written for a festival as opposed to a state occasion was based on the story which Sir Walter Scott deals with in his novel *Kenilworth*.<sup>1</sup> The chief conductor of the Birmingham Festival, Sir Michael Costa, personally recommended to the committee that Sullivan should be commissioned to write a work for the festival in 1864. The libretto was provided by Henry Chorley (who would later be better known for his words to Sullivan's partsong 'The Long Day Closes') who was looking for a subject of local interest. Chorley seized upon the 1575 visit of Queen Elizabeth and her visit to the home of the Earl of Leicester at Kenilworth. At that time Kenilworth Castle was the seat of Lord Robert Dudley who had lavishly entertained the queen in 1566 and 1568. (In fact these visits often proved financially ruinous to their hosts who nevertheless felt duty-bound to entertain their monarch.) The 1575 visit proved to be the most lavish all with banquets and pageants mounted for Elizabeth's entertainment and it was one keenly described by Scott in the novel:

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<sup>1</sup> Throughout Sullivan's career he turned to Walter Scott for inspiration. He used Scott's poetry for the lyrics to part songs such as 'O Hush Thee, my Baby' (1867) and 'Joy to the Victors' (1868), for the orchestral Overture *Marmion* (commissioned by the Philharmonic Society in 1867), drawing room ballads such as *County Guy* (1867) and *Troubadour* (1869) and his grand opera *Ivanhoe* (1891).

'The word was quickly passed along the line, 'The Queen! The Queen! Silence and stand fast!' Onward came the cavalcade, illuminated by two hundred thick waxen torches, in the hands of as many horsemen, which cast a light like that of broad day all around the procession, but especially on the principal group, of which the Queen herself, arrayed in the most splendid manner, and blazing with jewels, formed the central figure. ----- as soon as the music gave signal that she was so far advanced, a raft, so disposed, as to resemble a small floating island, illuminated by a great variety of torches, and surrounded by floating pageants, formed to represent sea-horses, on which sat Tritons, Nereids, and other fabulous deities of the sea and rivers, made its appearance upon the lake, and issuing from behind a small heronry where it had been concealed, floated gently towards the farther end of the bridge.

On the islet appeared a beautiful woman, clad in a watchet-coloured silken mantle, bound with a broad girdle, inscribed with characters like the phylacteries of the Hebrews. Her feet and arms were bare, but her wrists and ankles were adorned with gold bracelets of uncommon size. Amidst her long silky black hair, she wore a crown and chaplet of artificial mistletoe, and bore in her hand a rod of ebony tipped with silver. Two Nymphs attended her, dressed in the same antique and mystical guise.

The pageant was so well managed, that this Lady of the Floating Island, having performed her voyage with much picturesque effect, landed at Mortimer's Tower with her two attendants, just as Elizabeth presented herself before that outwork. The stranger then, in a well-penned speech, announced herself as the famous Lady of the Lake, renowned in the stories of King Arthur, who has nursed the youth of the redoubted Sir Lancelot, and whose beauty had proved too powerful both for the wisdom and the spells of the mighty Merlin. Since that early period she had remained possessed of her crystal dominions, she said, despite the various men of fame and might by whom Kenilworth had been successively tenanted. The Saxons, the Danes, the Normans, the Saintlowes, the Clintons, the Mountforts, the Mortimers, the Plantagnets, great though they were in arms and magnificence, had never, she said, caused her to raise her head from the waters which hid her crystal palace. But a greater than all these great names had now appeared, and she came in homage and duty to welcome the peerless Elizabeth to all sport which the Castle and its environs, which lake or land could afford.'<sup>2</sup>

Chorley himself was moved to provide an introduction to the work:

My fancy was directed to this Kenilworth pageant, not merely from its local interest to those interesting themselves in our great Midland Festival, but because I have long known, almost by heart, Scott's wondrously musical, but as wondrously simple, description of the arrival of England's maiden Queen at her subject's palace on a

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<sup>2</sup> Scott, W., *Kenilworth* (Heron Books, London 1971) 198



'summer night'. And I name Scott expressly, seeing that I have to plead his great example for an anachronism which will be found here. When such a mastery of history, of passion, of poetry, and of romance, as he allowed himself to introduce in his novel allusions to "Troilus and Cressida", and "A Midsummer Night's Dream", as so many court (if not household) words, familiar to Raleigh and to Sidney, ere the Queen made her progress into Warwickshire - at which time Shakespeare was but a boy, - I hope I may be forgiven for representing the play 'set before the Queen' by the exquisite "summer night" scene from the Merchant of Venice".<sup>3</sup>

*Kenilworth* was first heard at Birmingham on Thursday, 8 September 1864 under the composer's baton, with an orchestra of 140 players and a chorus of several hundred.

After a rapturous reception from the Birmingham audience, the work was repeated, this time at the Crystal Palace on 12 November under the direction of August Manns. A review of the first performance appeared in *The Times* and was somewhat guarded in its acclaim:

Mr Arthur Sullivan's *Kenilworth* opened the third and last miscellaneous concert pleasantly enough. That this new effort of the young and rising musician bears out the promise of his music for *The Tempest* cannot truthfully be observed; still less that in composing it expressly for the Birmingham Festival he has taken advantage of so golden a chance precisely in such a manner as those who really wish him well, and for that reason are disinclined to flatter him might have desired.<sup>4</sup>

The *Musical Times*, while sharing some reservations as to Sullivan's readiness for such a commission, nonetheless acknowledged the work's flair and imagination:

'*Kenilworth* contains many points of interest...the treatment of the "Summer Night" scene from *The Merchant of Venice*...shows unmistakable signs of fancy, if not genius, which should be carefully watched by those who have the interest of the young composer at heart.'<sup>5</sup> Acknowledging that the cantata was in fact a 'masque', a

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<sup>3</sup> Chorley, H.F., *Introductory* from Vocal Score of *Kenilworth* (Chappell & Co: London), 1.

<sup>4</sup> *The Times*, 12 September 1864.

<sup>5</sup> *Musical Times*, 1 October 1864.

large proportion of pageant music, marches and dances (seen by Sullivan as indispensable in the work), the critic of *The Times* thought that there was 'still no reason why something more of pomp and dignity should not have been thrown into certain parts, instead of the almost trivial pettiness which is in a great measure its prevailing characteristic'.<sup>6</sup> The masque was welcomed as an 'agreeable' work, unambitious in its plan and scope, unpretentious in style, lively, tuneful, fresh and extremely well written both for the voices and the instruments. The poem by Chorley (well-established as one of London's most prominent musical commentators) was apparently based on the fact that for the entertainment of the Queen during her visit to Kenilworth, a temporary bridge, 70 feet in length, was thrown across the valley to the great gate of Kenilworth castle. The Lady of the Lake, invisible since the disappearance of Prince Arthur, approached on a floating island along the moat to recite praises in verse to Queen Elizabeth. Orion, being summoned to praise the Queen, appeared on a dolphin 24 feet long, which had a whole orchestra in its belly. Music and dancing was in abundance and a play was performed. This is what is on record as happening during the Queen's visit, and this, for the most part, is the story of the masque as set and conceived by Sullivan. For his purpose, the play became *The Merchant of Venice*, which was, as Chorley admitted, historically inaccurate as a choice since it was written long after the visit to Kenilworth, but in choosing it, Chorley allowed Sullivan the opportunity of

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<sup>6</sup> *The Times*, 12 September 1864.

composing what is generally regarded as the best music in the work.<sup>7</sup> Indeed, it gave the composer more scope in which to explore different stylistic and historical elements of the pageant in retrospect.

The work, dedicated to Michael Costa with 'dedication and respect', was described as 'a masque of the days of Queen Elizabeth' and signed 'A.S.S. Op. 4'.<sup>8</sup> The music for the vocal score was arranged from Sullivan's manuscript full score by a former fellow Leipzig student, Franklin Taylor,<sup>9</sup> and it has the familiar (for this time) name 'Arthur S. Sullivan Op 4' (Sullivan later dropped his middle initial from all future scores and correspondence). The work begins with an orchestral introduction, descriptive of a summer night. Graceful and tuneful, it avoids the more auspicious rhetoric of a fully-blown sonata movement; instead, given its prelude (as well as pictorial) function for a masque, Sullivan adopts a simpler ternary structure with the addition of an introduction (as mentioned above) and quiet, retiring coda which effectively act as a frame to the inner tripartite plan. Opening with a sweeping prelude for the harp, the harmonic background is characterised by its distinctive quasi modal progression V - iib (Example 1), one that Sullivan clearly liked, for it is repeated again, slightly altered as Ib-iib:

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<sup>7</sup> The implication is that when Chorley introduced Shakespeare into the libretto he unintentionally released Sullivan from the confines of his own words and thereby allowed the composer (finding Shakespeare's words more agreeable for musical treatment) to produce better music as a result.

<sup>8</sup> *Kenilworth* Vocal Score (Chappell & Co: London, 1864)

<sup>9</sup> Taylor was also a member of the teaching staff at the National Training School of Music during the brief period of its existence (teaching harmony and pianoforte) and served under Sullivan during his time as Principal of the School and then later serving under Sullivan's successor Stainer.



### Ex. 1: Opening of Introduction to *Kenilworth*

Presenting a picture of a pastoral idyll in the introductory bars, the principal theme, an operatic, vocal melody that might have happily appeared in any of the Savoy operettas, is presented in C major. This yields at letter B to a more agitated idea whose restive mood is paralleled by more fluid tonal behaviour which itself ushers in a repeat of the main theme in A flat major. Constituting the secondary phase of the ternary structure, the tertiary phase is the reprise of the main melody, now more richly scored (and one which looks forward to numerous contexts in the operatic overtures). Within the confines of the movement, Sullivan displays all his early-found and, later, very familiar techniques of melody and felicitous orchestration. Shimmering flutes and clarinets, in thirds, give way to martial trombones 17 bars before the end of the movement in a way that shows Sullivan at his best in both orchestration and melodic invention.

While the opening prelude has an air of late Romantic contemporaneity,

the opening contralto solo and chorus is more reminiscent of earlier royal pageant, i.e. that of Handel (Example 2):

The image shows a page of a musical score for the opera *Kenilworth*. It features a contralto solo and a chorus. The contralto solo begins with the lyrics "Hark! the sound that hails a King" and "Yonder can-non sig-nal-ing". The chorus responds with "She is here! she is here!" in a repeated note pattern. The score is written for contralto, soprano, tenor, and bass, with piano accompaniment. The key signature is E major (three sharps) and the time signature is 4/4. The page number 12600 is visible at the bottom left.

## Ex. 2: Character of royal pageant, *Kenilworth*

In the strikingly contrasting key of E major (which throws the martial nature of this movement into relief), the chorus, in Handelian manner, respond with Sullivan's signature manner of writing a melody which is basically formed from repeated notes,<sup>10</sup> syllabically declaimed, in response (Example 3):

<sup>10</sup> Many examples of this repeated note compositional element can be found throughout Sullivan's output. In his orchestral works such as the opening of *In Memoriam* (1866), in his songs most notably in the opening phrases of *The Lost Chord* (1877), and in his operettas such as 'In enterprise of martial kind' from *The Gondoliers* (1889), or 'For a month to dwell is a dungeon cell' from *Princess Ida* (1884), to give but two examples from the many which may be found in his work for the Savoy. Very often the repeated notes are both commenced and succeeded by arpeggios in order to complete the musical phrase as in *The Gondoliers* example. The same musical ideas are employed in the choral works to great effect (see footnote 7 in Chapter Two for example).

### Ex. 3: The chorus's role of *turba*, *Kenilworth*

In the role as *turba* (the Queen's subjects), the chorus echoes the contralto soloist, with the words 'Hark the sound that hails a king. Yonder cannon signalling she is near!'. The voices proclaim the queen's arrival in unison (replete with baroque walking bass) 'as she sweeps in maiden state, through her vassal's passage gate', all of which is conceived as an extended introduction to the final welcome - 'God save the Queen' (Example 4) - with Sullivan attempting to build up the drama and excitement of the arrival of the Monarch not only with dramatic tremolando strings and vibrant brass, but also some highly creative tonal divergences (see pp. 13 and 14) which heighten the theatrical atmosphere:





Ex. 4: Climax of 'God save the Queen', *Kenilworth*

The third movement, the song of the 'Lady of the Lake' is a simple strophic form, though it betrays certain baroque trappings with its familiar 'pastoral' musette drone and ritornello-like interventions from the orchestra within the verses. For all its baroque trappings, the movement is, nonetheless, a 6/8 ballad with refrain ('For there's joy for each newcomer') for soprano written in the dominant G major, having much in common with similar song paradigms of the much later opera *The Rose of Persia* (1899)<sup>11</sup>. Indeed, in terms of melody and orchestration this piece would have served well in one of his Savoy pieces and could even have been published as one of his many drawing-room ballads.

Continuing the trend of third-relationships, the fourth movement is cast in E flat. For all its jollity and lightheartedness, this is an ambitious design in which the composer sought to exercise his thorough knowledge of different techniques,

<sup>11</sup> A case in point is the solo 'neath my lattice through the night' sung by Rose-in-Bloom. See the Vocal Score of *The Rose of Persia* (Chappell & Co: London, 1899) 38

which though potentially disparate, are here combined and contrasted with considerable skill. The main frame of the movement is the male chorus 'Let Fauns the cymbal ring' (Example 5), the music of which is nineteenth-century quadrille with some phraseological assymetry (not the 4 + 5 phrases that open the chorus).

QUARTETT AND CHORUS OF SYLVANS.  
CORO. ARTHUR S. SULLIVAN.

ALLEGRO MODERATO  
R. CON BRIO  
(♩ = 150.)

Let Fauns the cym. bal  
ring, And blow the cor. net sweet, While Sylvans tribute bring To O. ri. a. na's

Ex. 5: Opening of Quartet and Chorus 'Let Fauns the cymbal ring', *Kenilworth*

The quadrille is one with a difference, however, for it also incorporates distant horn calls which are themselves conspicuous by their presence in a distant D major. The centrepiece, however, of the movement is an operatic unaccompanied solo quartet which might easily have found a place in an act of any of Verdi's grand operas of the 1850's (*Rigoletto* of course comes to mind, but there are comparable instances in *La Traviata*, *Il Trovatore* and *Simon Boccanegra*).<sup>12</sup> This elaborate, contrapuntal section

<sup>12</sup> Sullivan would have been familiar with these works and many others because of his editorship (both sole and in some instances in collaboration with Josiah Pittman) of vocal scores of operas in Boosey's Royal Edition in



quickly becomes the bedrock of the movement to which the chorus 'comment' and interject. Concluding in G major, the chorus is used skillfully as a conduit back to E flat, though before this is enacted, an even more arresting recurrence of the distant horn calls - now in D flat rather than D - momentarily delays the return of the tonic. A second verse from the solo quartet soon begins to take on the more auspicious rhetoric of a 'finale' as the music becomes more elaborate and more operatically gesticulative, notably for the athletic solo soprano (e.g. here climb on pp. 30-31 to a top B flat and the even more demanding triplets that follow to the cadence). In addition, the quartet is this time 'joined' by the male chorus whose interjectional music has now become more insistent, paving the way for a reprise of their opening music (see p. 31) and a concluding gesture of royal admiration (p. 32), replete with surprising progressions ('How *brave* she is!') and 'grand' cadence.

An 'old' slow (binary) dance in B flat major, in the style of a minuet with chorus, is perhaps more distantly reminiscent of those seventeenth-century French *Comédies-ballet* of Lully, though the choral refrain of 'Fa la la la la', makes a more pointed reference to the English ballett of Weelkes and Morley, well known at Elizabeth's court. In addition, the style of the chorus material, with its emphasis on the second beat, also makes reference to the more baroque style-form of the sarabande. Sullivan's legerdemain, however, may be witnessed in his ability to bring musical interest to a choral movement of no particular textual significance. This can be felt in the persistent presence of G minor, or more specifically, its

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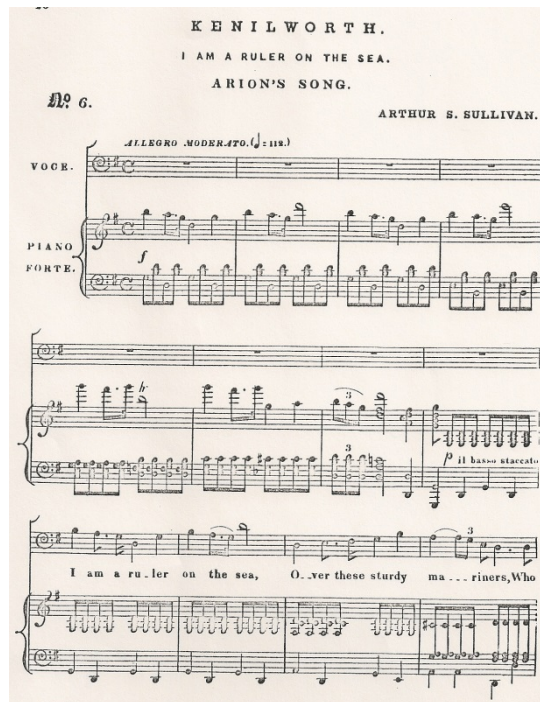
the 1860's.

dominant which is first heard in bar 4 of the chorus (p. 35) and to which the first phrase concludes (top of p. 36). This half-cadence lends a questioning poise to the first half of the chorus (see p. 37) and even when B flat begins to assert itself more fully in the second part, G minor fails to be expunged (see top of p. 38 - Example 6).

The image shows a page of a musical score, page 35, for a chorus. At the top, it is labeled 'Wind Instr.' and 'Piano'. The piano part is written in G minor and features a half-cadence at the end of the first phrase. The chorus part is written for Soprano and Contralto voices. The lyrics 'Fa la la' are repeated throughout the chorus. The score is in 2/4 time and includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings like 'f' and 'ff'.

Ex. 6: End of 'old' dance and 'Fa la la' chorus, *Kenilworth*

Orion's song 'I am a ruler on the sea' (Example 7) presages Sullivan's writing for the stage and looks forward to the 'salt water' popular patriotic style of *H.M.S. Pinafore* and parts of *Ruddigore* and even *Utopia Limited*. Like its solo counterpart, 'The Lady of the Lake', it was published as a separate item and remained a popular 'ballad' item at the Chappell Ballad Concerts in London:



Ex. 7: Opening of 'I am a ruler on the sea', *Kenilworth*

Nevertheless, Sullivan is also perhaps trying to invoke something of those bracing eighteenth-century strophic songs of Arne, Dibdin, Eccles and Linley, especially in their baroque cadences. This robust style forms an important fulcrum in the masque in that it concludes the series of 'divertissements'.

The short solo contralto section that follows - 'Place for the Queen!' - recalls the opening of the orchestral introduction with its initial return to C major and the reiteration of the V - iib progression. On this occasion, however, this harmonic gesture is part of a much more radical tonal shift to D flat major, the Neapolitan, and one that brakes with the third-relational trend of the previous movements. Even more arresting is Sullivan's shift of mode to C sharp minor at the beginning of the next movement, which, in the mind of most critics, was considered the high-water mark of the masque. Stanford, who greatly admired *Kenilworth* and

Sullivan's student music to *The Tempest* considered it 'charming' and comparable with the duet between the Prince and Elsie in *The Golden Legend* (see Chapter Five).<sup>13</sup> It is tempting to think that Sullivan saw the role of this central set piece, a 'reverie', as paralleling a similar role to those extradiegetic songs Shakespeare included in his own comedies.

The style and orchestration is, perhaps, reminiscent of those gossamer-like gestures in Mendelssohn's incidental music to *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, not least in the choice of C# minor as a key (Example 8). It is this very tonality that Mendelssohn deployed in the more solemn conclusion to the development which ends in the relative to E major). Sullivan's texture here, obviously nocturnal, conjures up a similar scene. C# minor dominates the opening section of this extended scena, though as the introduction progresses, this tonal treatment, which passes through A major and F# major, becomes more fluid. Sullivan's use of A major is particularly subtle, for it is this third-related tonality that provides the source for his German augmented sixth and the transition to the 6/4 of D flat *major* at the first climax for the solo tenor ('is in immortal sounds') marking the final transition to the cavatina.

The main duet ('In such a night as this'), couched in D flat, is effectively an operatic cavatina in a simple ternary form, having much in common melodically and gesturally with those nocturnes of Field and Chopin with their opening upward-leaping sixths. The vocal trajectory of the two parts is also skillfully managed so that

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<sup>13</sup> Stanford, C. V., 'Sullivan's *Golden Legend*' in *Studies and Memories* (Archibald Constable & Co. Ltd: London, 1908), 167.

the ultimate climax, on top B flat, for the soprano is reached shortly before the final cadence.

KENILWORTH.  
HOW SWEET THE MOONLIGHT SLEEPS.  
DUET.  
(SCENE FROM THE "MERCHANT OF VENICE.")  
ARTHUR S. SULLIVAN.

♩ 7.

ANDANTE  
TRANQUILLO  
(♩ = 88.)

12607.

Ex. 8: Opening of the scena 'How sweet the moonlight sleeps', *Kenilworth*

As a counterbalance to the 'slow' dance in triple time, 'A Brisk Dance', provides an 'interlude' and continues the trend of third-related keys one step further to A minor. Based on a quasi-bucolic drone, the entire dance is a contemporary interpretation of a musette. This marks the end of the 'revels' in the masque, for, as is anticipated in the short arioso transition for contralto that follows ("After banquet, play and riot, Cometh timely hour of quiet"), the final chorus is not the more stereotypical 'paean of praise' but an inversion of that typical gesture, even though at first, with trumpet heralds, we expect fanfares and adulation. As articulated by the

opening words, the chorus is in fact an invocation to sleep ('Sleep, great Queen!') where the role of the trumpet fanfares is of the expectation of daylight to follow. These elements of contrast provide a charming drama to what is essentially a closing hymn, and though the climaxes are indeed conspicuous, it is to the quieter gestures of 'Sleep in peace' that they are phrased, even to the hushed proclamation of 'God save the Queen' at the very end.

In 1927 Herbert Sullivan, the composers nephew, collaborated with the writer and music critic Newman Flower, famous for his biography of Handel amongst other books, in the production of a book about his uncle. This, together with one of the earliest examples of a book about Sullivan by Arthur Lawrence (of which Sullivan actually read the proofs in 1899) prove very intriguing in that the writers all knew the composer personally<sup>14</sup> and provide an insight into what Sullivan himself must have thought about *Kenilworth* when they point out that:

Chorley's libretto was bad; it was unquestionably one of the worst Sullivan ever set. In later years he admitted that no libretto in his life ever tried him so much. But he smothered the defects with a great piece of composing. He gave to it the same ardour he had devoted to *The Tempest*, believing that he would be judged and his progress or his falling away from grace assessed on the comparison of the new work with *The Tempest*. When the work was in rehearsal at Birmingham he was well satisfied with it. The midnight oil had not been burned in vain, nor did the defective Chorley ever seem to matter so little.<sup>15</sup>

This idea seems to have originated in the Lawrence biography (and therefore, by

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<sup>14</sup> Sullivan's cousin B.W. Findon was also an early biographer of the composer. His book *Sir Arthur Sullivan: His Life and Music* was originally published in 1904 and the first edition had to be withdrawn because of allegations made about Stanford and the Leeds Musical Festival, which Stanford objected to. The allegations were expunged from the second edition which was eventually published, after much revision and after a considerable passage of time had elapsed, in 1907.

<sup>15</sup> Sullivan, H. & Flower, N. *Sir Arthur Sullivan, His Life, Letters and Diaries* (Cassell & Company Ltd, London, 1927) 47

implication, had Sullivan's *imprimatur*) when he wrote that Chorley's libretto for the opera *The Sapphire Necklace*:

...proved quite unsuitable for stage presentation and most of the music has been utilized since in other works<sup>16</sup>. Then came his cantata *Kenilworth*. Here he again suffered at the hands of his librettist, as he suffered, it may be recorded, *inter alia*, on much more recent occasions.<sup>17</sup>

By 'much more recent occasions' Lawrence may have been implicating works like *The Beauty Stone* which was written for the Savoy in 1898 by Osmond Carr and Arthur Pinero. Sullivan complained that the writers would neither listen to him nor make alterations suggested by him to the libretto and he placed the blame for the opera's comparative failure on this. According to Lawrence, *Kenilworth*, 'in spite of the libretto, [it] received very enthusiastic recognition. The interpolated scene from *The Merchant of Venice* 'How sweet the moonlight sleeps' will probably be best remembered and is often heard now in the concert room'.<sup>18</sup>

With Helen Lemmans-Sherrington, William Cummings and Charles Santley as the original soloists for *Kenilworth*, the work had every chance of success and the Shakespeare duet and the *Brisk Dance*, each showing the composer at his best and without the relative distraction of Chorley's words were by all accounts enthusiastically applauded. Sullivan published the vocal score, dedicated it with affection and respect to Michael Costa and re-published it at a greatly reduced price after he had revised some of the orchestration for its second performance at the

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<sup>16</sup> Here Lawrence was making a reference to the lost opera *The Sapphire Necklace*, of which only the overture now remains. Certainly none of the tunes contained in the overture ever found themselves in other works.

<sup>17</sup> Lawrence, Arthur, *Sir Arthur Sullivan*, (James Bowden, London 1899) 60.

<sup>18</sup> Lawrence, 1899. 60

Crystal Palace in November. The press had very little to say in favour of the text, however, and the public seems to have lost interest in it almost immediately. This was perhaps because the very nature of *Kenilworth* as a choral genre - a masque and *pièce d'occasion* - was problematic as a work to programme for concerts. As a royal adulation it was not a work ideally suited to the standard type of programme favouring more extended works such as cantatas and oratorios, and as a work without a story, it lacked the involvement for audiences who were hungry for human elements of drama, love and tragedy. However, according to one critic, *Kenilworth* could still be regarded as 'a step onward in Mr Sullivan's career.'<sup>19</sup> As a piece it surely represented a development for the composer in how to manage the constituent parts of a choral work with imagination. But he was to go further with the cantata of 1871, *On Shore and Sea*. This cantata was written for the opening of the International Exhibition by the Prince of Wales in 1871. Immediately after the opening ceremony, which was held amid much pageantry, a vocal and instrumental concert which was described in the programme as an 'Exhibition of Musical Arts' was given. New pieces were written for the occasion by Ciro Pinsuti, Charles Gounod and Ferdinand Hiller in addition to Sullivan. All the composers conducted their own works. *The Times* of 2 May 1871 had a review of the first performance of the Sullivan piece in which the writer commented 'last, not least, England was represented and we may add worthily represented by Mr Arthur Sullivan, who contributed a dramatic cantata entitled 'On Shore and Sea'.

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<sup>19</sup> *The Times*, 15 November 1864.



Described as a 'dramatic cantata' the author Tom Taylor made it clear in the score that 'the action passes in the sixteenth century, at a port of the Riviera, near Genoa, and on board of a Genoese and a Moorish galley at sea'. The work begins on shore at one of the many small sea ports dependent on Genoa in which galleys were manned and fitted out for her service and the remainder of the action takes place at sea, on board, first a Genoese and then afterwards a Moorish galley. Just as in a stage piece, the work has *dramatis personae* - La Sposine (a Riviera woman), Il Marinajo (a Genoese Sailor) and a chorus of Riviera women, Genoese Sailors and Moorish Sea Rovers. Fundamentally it embodies a dramatic action in a series of events, two principal characters, chorus as characters rather than merely choral singers on a platform, and two distinct scenes (almost imaginary stage sets) in which the action of the supposed choral cantata is supposed to take place. In his preface, Taylor sets out 'The Argument' which is important in as much as it tells the listener exactly what the author is trying to achieve:

As a subject not inappropriate to a celebration intended for the honour and advancement of the Arts of Peace, this cantata has for its theme the sorrows and separations necessarily incidental to war. A dramatic form has been chosen, as lending itself best to musical expression. In order to keep clear of the national susceptibilities, and painful associations connected with recent warfare, the action has been thrown back to the time when constant conflict was waged between the Saracen settlements on the shores of North Africa and the Christian powers of the Mediterranean sea -board - particularly the Genoese. The action passes on shore at one of the many small sea ports dependent on Genoa, such as Cogoletto, or Camogli, Buta, or Porta-Ferio - in which galleys were manned and fitted out for her service- and at sea, on board, first a Genoese, and afterwards of a Moorish galley. The Cantata opens with the fleet weighing anchor to the joyous song of the sailors as they heave at the windlass, and spread the sail, and the lament of wives and mothers, sisters and sweethearts, left sorrowing on the shore.

Then the scene changes to the sea. Aboard one of the galleys, in the

midnight watch, the thoughts and prayers of the Marinajo go back to the loved ones left behind, and invoke for them the protection of our Lady, Star of the Sea. Months pass. The scene changes again to the shore. The fleet, so long and anxiously looked for, shows on the horizon, and the crowd flocks to the port to greet its triumphant entry, headed by the young wife or maiden whose fortunes the Cantata follows. But the price of triumph must be paid-the galley aboard which her sailor served is missing: it has been taken by the rovers. Her beloved is captive or slain. She gives expression to her desolation, amid the sympathizing sorrow of her companions. Her lover, however, is not slain, but a slave, toiling at the oar, under the lash of his Moorish captors. He plans a rising on the rovers, and while they are celebrating their triumphs with song and feasting, possesses himself of the key of the chain to which, as it ran from stem to stern of these galleys, each prisoner was secured, and exhorts his fellow prisoners to strike for their liberty. The galley slaves, after encouraging each other to this enterprise while they toil at the oar, rise on their captors, master the galley and steer homewards. Re-entering the port, they are welcomed by their loved ones; the sorrow of separation is turned to rejoicing, and the Cantata ends with a chorus expressing the blessedness of Peace and inviting all nations to this her Temple.

It is easy to see how a story of this kind could so easily be transferred from the concert hall to the theatre stage (not unlike earlier models of Handel's *Semele* and Berlioz's *La Damnation de Faust*) and this same transition could be made by almost any of Sullivan's works written for the concert platform. Certainly the music which Sullivan provided for the piece abounds with the usual forms he used in his stage pieces. The cantata (with all its constituent movements defined in Italian, perhaps reflecting the nature of the Italian story as well its operatic nature) opens with the fleet weighing anchor to the singing of sailors as they set about their work and this is contrasted with the lamenting music of wives and mothers as they cry at being left ashore. Such a contrast, in many ways represents in microcosm the essential distinction between shore and sea, which Sullivan used all the way through the cantata. The first chorus is, in fact, subtitled 'On shore', while the second movement

is subtitled 'On sea'. This contradistinction is preserved throughout. The characterisation and construction of the chorus is one that typified Sullivan's greater instinct for the stage. Rather than focus on a symphonic or developmental style of musical argument and thematic style, Sullivan's component parts of the movement are essentially clear and uncomplicated as is the form. The nautical nature of the orchestral material - the heaving of the waves - remains virtually unchanged throughout the entire movement. The cheerful song ('The windless ply') for tenors and basses (as sailors) in the tonic key (C major) contrasts with secondary material for the lamenting mothers and wives ('You leave us here to watch and weep') which moves obliquely, through minor tonalities, to the dominant. A reprise then ensues of the male chorus material with interjections from the female until all combine in a final statement of unanimity ('Then up with the Red Cross broad and brave') at the conclusion.

The scene then changes to the sea. Aboard one of the galleys, in the midnight watch, the thoughts and prayers of the Marinajo go back to the loved ones left behind and they pray for their safety. The form of this section is 'Recitative, Aria e Coro', a model often found in Rossini, Donizetti and early Verdi operas, and one often found in Sullivan's Savoy operettas. Consisting of two verses, in which the voice is a predominant feature, strongly redolent of Italian opera, the second verse is joined by a male chorus whose prayer is hymn-like in both its homophonic and diatonic simplicity (Example 9):



Ex. 9: The prayer of the sailors of No. 2 *On Shore and Sea*

In the next section, where we return to shore once again, the passing of time and the return of the ship is narrated by 'La Sposina' in a movement headed 'Recitative'. This is an interesting dramatic concept, again largely drawn from operatic techniques. Here the recitative acts as a conduit in which the narration from the soloist is supported by a range of orchestral accompaniments. Indeed, the first part of the movement is entirely given to an orchestral prelude in E major in which the Italian 'popular' atmosphere is palpable. The second part, however, markedly shifts in mood as La Sposina fails to see her beloved among the ships. The sense of anagnorisis (or, more to the point, the failure of recognition to take place) brings us more powerfully into the domain of Verdi's middle-period operas, especially with the presence of tremolando strings, the menace of heavy brass, the answering drums as cannon and the shift to E minor. The closing tremolando, in particular, is especially reminiscent of the last act of *Rigoletto*.

Remaining 'on shore', the 'Aria con Coro' for La Sposina is a gentle lament for her beloved. Again Sullivan's simple construction is highly effective. A song-like

melody (which might easily be one from his Savoy operettas) explores a series of four-bar phrases which climaxes with a shift from the tonic (E) to G major whose recovery, enacted with true legerdemain, articulates her sense of pain and loss ('Sad my voice along the shore'). The female chorus provide a refrain and also lead the reprise ('Sad her voice along the shore') elaborated by a descant-like countermelody for the soloist.

A further interlude is provided by a Moorish dance, a 'Moresque' (Example 10), in which Sullivan attempted to 'orientalise' the sound through the use of mode, an accentuation on the augmented second at the cadence and careful attention to the unusual mimicry of 'Moorish' pipes and string-playing in the scoring (particular emphasis is placed on the use of the viola as a melodic instrument here).

The use of the Moresque is not simply, however, to provide a colourful respite. It also serves to shift our attention to the Moorish ship. Back at sea again, we move to the plight of Il Marinajo who, having being taken captive aboard a Moorish ship, is made to join the gang of slave oarsmen. His 'Recitative e Coro' has a different emphasis. The recitative, infused with the 'Moresque' material, yields to 'Chorus of Moslem Triumph' which is effectively a dance with chorus 'Allahu Akbar - Mohamadar' that functions initially as a 'oriental' *cantus firmus* before it takes up the melodic material of the 'Moresque'. Sullivan's attempt at a Moorish evocation may have been one suffused with nineteenth-century Romanticism, but the fluctuation between the tonic B minor/major and the dominant pedal of D is striking in its colour and unusual modality:



Ex. 10: The 'Moresque' (movement 5), *On Shore and Sea*

A further dramatic recitative for Il Marinajo provides a narration for the Christian slaves to break their bonds. This is effected once again with a dramatic undercurrent of tremolando from the orchestra, and a shift in tonal direction from B major to D flat major, the key of the 'Chorus of Christian Captives'. The hushed beginning which rises steadily to an 'ff' climax of defiance has all the devices of a rescue opera; indeed, the impression of *Fidelio*<sup>20</sup> is not far away, and the shifting sands of Sullivan's harmonic progressions throughout add to the sense of theatrical tension:

<sup>20</sup> *Fidelio* is one of seven operas for which Sullivan took sole responsibility as editor in the Boosey Royal edition and is, therefore, an opera he obviously knew well and one whose influence in this work is perhaps not entirely surprising. See footnote 10 above.

No. 8. CHORUS OF CHRISTIAN CAPTIVES.

*Andante maestoso.*

PIANO

*p*

*f*

*Pol.*

*p* TENOR.

*p* BASS.

With a will, oh, bro - thers, with one will for all, Think of wives and

With a will, oh, bro - thers, with one will for all, Think of wives and

*p* UNISON.

mo - thers, as the oars rise and fall. Hea - ry hearts make wea - ry hands, and *p* Unison.

mo - thers, as the oars rise and fall. Hon - ry hearts make wea - ry hands, and

*dim.*

hea - ry ours should be, Toil - ing for the In - fi - del,

*dim.*

hea - ry ours should be, Toil - ing for the In - fi - del,

*dim.*

*p*

Ex. 11: Chorus of Captive Slaves, *On Shore and Sea*

This sense of operatic energy spills into the 'Recitative e Duetto' which follows 'on shore', and the sense of hope in this section is subtly restrained - providing a creative reinterpretation to the normal unrestrained emotion of the cabaletta - until the defiant close. The duet also functions as part of a larger two-part structure as a prelude to the 'Coro Finale'. Here Sullivan restores C major from the opening along with the orchestral accompanimental material of the first movement (Example 11), though this time in support of a hymn-like paragraph entreating all nations to seek peace rather than war: <sup>21</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Notice Sullivan's use of the repeated note to form the melody. See footnote 8 above.



No 10. CORO FINALE.  
Allegro tempo di marcia.

PIANO. *f*

*f* Soprano.  
Sink and scat - ter clouds of war,  
*f* *Allo.*

*f* Tenor.  
Sink and scat - ter clouds of war,  
*f*

*f* Bass.  
Sink and scat - ter clouds of war,  
*f*

*f*

Ped. \* Ped. \*

Sun of peace shine full and far l  
Sun of peace shine full and far l  
Sun of peace shine full and far l  
Sun of peace shine full and far l

Ped. \* Ped. \*

Ex. 11: Opening of the final chorus 'Sink and scatter clouds of war', *On Shore and Sea*.

The 'trio' ('Why should nations slay and spoil') is a march with a 'slow' theme shared between the altos and sopranos. Its own conclusion, somewhat unexpectedly is a solemn Anglican style of hymn which begins uncannily like George Elvey's tune ST GEORGE.<sup>22</sup> The link to the 'trio' is provided by a short quadrille section, though its recurrence before the final section is skilfully linked with the opening accompanimental material. And, as if to undermine our expectations of a conventional reprise, Sullivan restates not the opening 'hymn' material by the trio,

<sup>22</sup> Elvey wrote ST GEORGE for E. H. Thorne's *Selection of Psalm and Hymn Tunes* (1858) so this may well have been known by Sullivan, even though it later became better known as the setting for Henry Alford's 'Come, ye thankful people, come'.



now in C major.

*On Shore and Sea*, therefore, consists of eight choruses, together with recitatives and arias for soprano and bass soloists. The most striking thing about the cantata for the contemporary audience, as the critic of *The Times* pointed out was the fact that 'in certain parts of the work the young composer employed strange intervals which distinguish the oriental and especially the Turkish and Egyptian styles of melody. He has done this, moreover, with eminent success, because he has done it in such a way that genuine music is never kept out of mind.'<sup>23</sup> The music referred to occurs in the dance and 'chorus of Muslim Triumph' which is notable for an unusual Sullivan characteristic - the use, in the major key, of the major seventh at one pitch and the minor seventh when an octave higher, over a pedal point (dominant or tonic), and also for its very rare use of an instrument known as the 'Jingling Johnny' or 'Chinese Pavilion'. The effect of the use of this instrument is undoubtedly exhilarating and adds to the general sense of unceasing energetic movement in the music. Sullivan's use of the instrument would have been a very unusual feature of the work, as it is an instrument of Turkish origin which seems to have been in use in Military bands from the eighteenth century onwards. However, apart from a recorded continued use in Germany, it seems to have been redundant from the middle of the nineteenth century. It is a matter of pure speculation as to whether Sullivan came across the instrument on his travels abroad or had known it as a student in Leipzig, but his use of the instrument in 1871 is perhaps the last to be

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<sup>23</sup> *The Times*, 2 May 1871.

found in a choral work, just as his use of the flageolet in *The Sorcerer* six years later is reputed to be the last use of that instrument by an English composer<sup>24</sup>. This interest in orchestral colour and exoticism aside, however, *On Shore and Sea* reveals a carefully constructed and rather novel design for a secular cantata which was clearly heavily influenced by the idea of a one-act Italian opera. In particular Sullivan's dramatic instinct is detectable in his understanding of the pacing of the individual movements which are notable for their simplicity, concision and brevity and by the apt choice of operatic models deployed for each movement. After its performance in London, it enjoyed a few performances before it sank without trace in the twentieth century. Yet, the work ultimately remains a highly significant example of one of Britain's most pioneering secular cantatas of the second half of the nineteenth century in which Italian operatic models were conspicuous. Moreover, it was written almost a decade before the advent of Parry's groundbreaking setting of Shelley's *Scenes from Prometheus Unbound* in which Teutonic symphonic techniques would supersede Sullivan's essentially Italian focus.

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<sup>24</sup> The instrument is played on stage by one of the characters, Rev. Dr Daly and is an integral part of the music in his ballad 'engaged to so and so'. See *The Sorcerer*, Vocal Score (Cramer & Co: London) 116

## CHAPTER TWO

### A TALE OF TWO *TE DEUMS*

Sullivan began and ended his career in the choral field by composing two settings of the *Te Deum*, both commissioned for Royal occasions and both amply illustrating Sullivan's unconventional approach to writing what otherwise might be supposed to be rather conventional forms of composition. Sullivan was on intimate terms with members of the Royal household almost throughout his adult life, so much so that one of his prize possessions kept on the mantle piece at his Queen's Mansions home in Victoria Street was an improvised butterfly net which Princess Louise had given him and with Alfred, Duke of Edinburgh, frequently calling in at the flat to play violin pieces to Sullivan's piano accompaniment, it is not surprising that when the Prince of Wales recovered from typhoid fever (the disease which had killed his father Prince Albert) in 1872, Sullivan was the natural choice to be offered a commission to write a *Te Deum* for the national day of Thanksgiving on the first of May 1872. With Alfred Duke of Edinburgh in charge of the arrangements for the day and with him believing that Sullivan was the man to uplift British music he was naturally given yet another official chance to prove himself worthy of the adoration of the Royal Family and to confirm his position as the most important musician in Victorian society. The text, of

course, was a given from the *Book of Common Prayer*, to which Sullivan appended the verses 'O Lord save the Queen and mercifully hear us when we call upon Thee' to the usual wording of the *Te Deum*. However, to allow for performance in circumstances other than the thanksgiving service for which it was originally intended the vocal score gives a repeat of the last verse proper as an alternative. Sullivan naturally had an interest in having the work repeated and heard everywhere in order to further establish and confirm his fame and the additional words facilitated this aim with ease.

According to Arthur Lawrence, Sullivan's first biographer, reviewing the event, upwards of thirty thousand people were present at the Thanksgiving, among them Princess Louise, the Duke of Edinburgh, the Prince and Princess of Teck and the Duke of Cambridge.<sup>1</sup> The music was sung by the London branch of the Handel Festival choir, consisting of over two thousand performers conducted by Augustus Manns, with Titiens as the soprano soloist. Sullivan was cheered at the end of the performance and made a great triumph as usual when he appeared in public. The Queen herself did not attend the performance, but in another sign of Sullivan's popularity with the Royal Family, the Duke of Edinburgh arranged for the work to be dedicated to her (as an even greater work, *Ivanhoe* of 1891, was to be similarly dedicated at the height of Sullivan's later career). In a letter to Sullivan, the Duke wrote: 'I have attained permission for you to dedicate your *Te Deum* to

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<sup>1</sup> Lawrence, A., *Sir Arthur Sullivan* (James Bowden: London, 1899), 84.

Her Majesty, but you had better write an application for permission to Sir Thomas Biddulph and I will take care you get the proper answer'.<sup>2</sup> The proper answer came in a letter from Sir Thomas which arrived on 16 April when Biddulph wrote to Sullivan informing him that permission for the dedication had been granted adding: 'I am pleased to say that Her Majesty rarely accords this privilege to anyone, and is only induced to do so on the occasion in question in consequence of the case and the performance taking place under the immediate Patronage of the Royal Family'.<sup>3</sup> The tradition of writing settings of the *Te Deum* essentially looked back to the popularity of Handel's extended *Dettingen Te Deum* which was often used as a *pièce d'occasion*, but most settings were made for liturgical use and were considerably shorter. Sullivan, with his background in church music, would have been familiar with this style of setting.<sup>4</sup> However, the opportunity of writing a large-scale setting of the *Te Deum* for such a unique Victorian event meant that he was provided with the ideal opportunity to demonstrate exactly what he could do with large forces and multi-movements, with each one having its own unique feeling and each one being a product of his own unique thoughts, his highly individual approach to the text and a means of demonstrating the extent of his technical prowess.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Allen, R., *Sir Arthur Sullivan* (Chappell & Co: London, 1975), 68.

<sup>3</sup> Jacobs, A., *Arthur Sullivan* (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 1984), 75.

<sup>4</sup> He wrote such a setting in D Major in 1866.

<sup>5</sup> The vocal score was published by Novello the same year and the full score was published some years later in 1887 whilst Sullivan was at work on *Ruddigore* and what for him

Sullivan appropriately envisaged a massive sense of architectural sound appropriate to the scale of the Crystal Palace when composing the *Te Deum*, because in addition to his soprano soloist and two-thousand-strong chorus, he had the usual first and second violins, violas, cellos, double basses, organ, flutes, oboe, clarinet, bassoon, four horns, four trombones, opicleide and timpani, all augmented by no less than a full military band. The use of band in addition to the orchestra appears to give a passing nod to the huge forces employed earlier in the century at a Jullien concert (which later, in *Patience* in 1881, Gilbert recalled as ‘the science of Jullien the eminent musico’) in his ‘monster’ concerts of Sullivan’s formative years rather than for example, the *Grande Messe* of Berlioz, which was not heard in Britain until 1883, the year of Sullivan’s knighthood by Queen Victoria as a recognition for writing his serious pieces and uplifting British music as the Victorian’s perceived it.

The *Te Deum*’s huge forces also remind the listener of the large numbers employed in Berlioz’s *Te Deum*. The work opens majestically with a fanfare-like idea:

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musically, was a lifetime away.



Ex. 1: Opening idea of *Festival Te Deum* (1872)

This dramatic opening, devoid of the lengthy orchestral preludes that pervade most English choral works of the period, is a succinct, curtain-raising gesture. In a key well suited to the use of brass, the music also incorporates the old English hymn tune ST ANNE, a tune which immediately relates the piece to former grand royal occasions and to its traditional inclusion in coronation services since the days of William Croft (the tunes attributed author). Sullivan had also made a significant arrangement of this tune for the Revd Robert Brown-Borthwick's *A Supplemental Hymn and Tune Book* of 1868 and the tune was later included in an embellished form in *Church Hymns* which Sullivan edited for publication in 1874<sup>6</sup>. The arrangement of ST ANNE

<sup>6</sup> Sullivan acknowledged his teacher Thomas Helmore in respect of this publication saying that Helmore was “enthusiastic for the revival of old church music --- and was at the head of the movement for the use of Gregorian music in the church. He published two works which are of permanent value, the ‘Hymnal Noted’ and a Psalter’ both of which are really monuments of research. The words were mostly translations by the Rev. J.M. Niel, the great hymnologist. I assisted in the work a good deal in harmonising tunes during the time I was a chorister there. The knowledge and experience I gained in this way in regard to hymn tunes assisted me materially in making my big collection for the S.P.C.K. entitled ‘Church Hymns’ and for this collection I wrote a great many tunes” (see Lawrence, A., *Sir Arthur Sullivan* (James Bowden 1899) 19-20. The knowledge and experience he gained was put to use

was recommended by John Spencer Curwen in his *Studies in Worship Music* (1880) as an example of free organ accompaniment where the instrument was used independently of the voices.<sup>7</sup> Sullivan's use of the tune in his *Te Deum* was, therefore, a third creative use of the tune. The entry of the choir, not unlike an operatic chorus on-stage, presents its own hymn-like tune with an antecedent (opening) phrase in the tonic, the consequent (answering) phrase modulating (in hymn-fashion) to the dominant.<sup>8</sup>



## Ex. 2: Choral opening of *Festival Te Deum* (1872)

This move to the dominant facilitates the extension of it as a pedal point which is ultimately prolonged over the next thirteen bars. Here, Bach-like in effect, Sullivan gives us a mock organ-like improvisation of imitative points before the 'hymn' is reiterated in a more condensed form of homophony and

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in his choral works since the *Boar War Te Deum* makes use of one of the tunes from the 1874 collection as an integral part of the composition and the influence of Gregorian chant is obvious in *The Golden Legend* and elsewhere in his choral output.

<sup>7</sup> See Dibble, J., 'Sullivan, Arthur Seymour' in *The Canterbury Dictionary of Hymnology* (Canterbury Press: Norwich, 2013).

<sup>8</sup> Note the one note repeated melody line in the soprano part (see footnote 9 in Chapter one).



counterpoint. The allusion to Bach is an important one, for this initial section ultimately acts as a prelude to a longer fugue based on the text 'To Thee all Angels cry aloud' - surely making reference both to the bipartite 'Prelude and Fugue' paradigm that was already becoming well known in Bach's organ works but also to Bach's own famous use of ST ANNE.



Ex. 3: Fugal section 'To Thee all Angels cry aloud', *Festival Te Deum* (1872)

Sullivan's fugal writing, replete with a regular invertible countersubject, shows how well he had learned his lessons in Leipzig, but the structure of the fugue is far from conventional. Two fugal expositions occur, the first from C major to the subdominant, 30 bars later, the second from B flat major (b. 31) to its own subdominant (E flat) over a span of 26 bars. The fugue then continues, but in a gesture more in keeping with his dramatic instinct, Sullivan begins to merge the fugal subject with the homophonic style of the 'preludial' material as if to suggest a reprise. Indeed, by the close, counterpoint has yielded to the exigencies of a dramatic 'finale'.

The second, more solemn section (replete with organ and lower brass) is couched in the mellow and darker tonal hue in E flat, a dramatic contrast with previous regal atmosphere of C major. The contrast of soprano and chorus make for a simple yet effective dialogue, although this apparent simplicity masks some deft thematic integration. The opening orchestral gesture is in fact derived from the 'Dresden Amen', well known to audiences for its liturgical use (usually after the blessing at the end of Mattins or Evensong)<sup>9</sup> and from its incorporation in Mendelssohn's 'Reformation' Symphony. This connection is confirmed with the choral gesture 'Heaven and earth are full of the Majesty of Thy Glory' (notably the V<sup>7</sup>c-I cadence in bb. 23-24 which corresponds with bb. 3-4). In addition, this upward sweep of a fifth is anticipated by the increasing upward gestures of a third and a fourth with the initial choral 'genuflection' of 'Holy, holy, holy', while the soprano's falling fourth gesture ('To Thee Cherubim and Seraphim') is concealed in the opening orchestral gesture in bb. 1-4. Sullivan's manipulation of tonality here is also worthy of comment. The soprano's opening shifts from E flat unexpectedly to G, a move which is elongated in the succeeding choral gesture. This shift up a third (E flat to G) is repeated by the soprano but down a third (C to E). With the chorus's repetition, which concludes on V of D (p. 14), Sullivan allows the soprano to enter more urgently with a thoroughly

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<sup>9</sup> Sullivan would have known the Dresden Amen probably through Stainer's published harmonisation. The 'Dresden Amen' would also figure in Stanford's Service in B flat Op. 10 and Wagner's 'Good Friday' music for *Parsifal*.

operatic ascent to a top B flat,<sup>10</sup> a gesture which ushers in a choral return to the tonic and a reprise of the 'Dresden Amen'. The rest of the section then combines the two thematic ideas in a more homogeneous gesture in which the top B flats of the soprano (intended for Titiens) feature prominently.

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No. 2. SOLO AND CHORUS. — "TO THEE CHERUBIN."

The musical score is for a piece titled "No. 2. SOLO AND CHORUS. — 'TO THEE CHERUBIN.'" It is marked "Andante" and is in 3/4 time with a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat). The score is arranged for five parts: Treble, Alto, Tenor (soprano lower), Bass, and Piano. The Solo section is for the Treble voice, with lyrics "To Thee Cherubin and". The Chorus section is for all voices and piano, with lyrics "Seraphin continually do cry, Ho-ly, Ho-ly, Ho-ly, Ho-ly." The piano part features a prominent "walking" bass line.

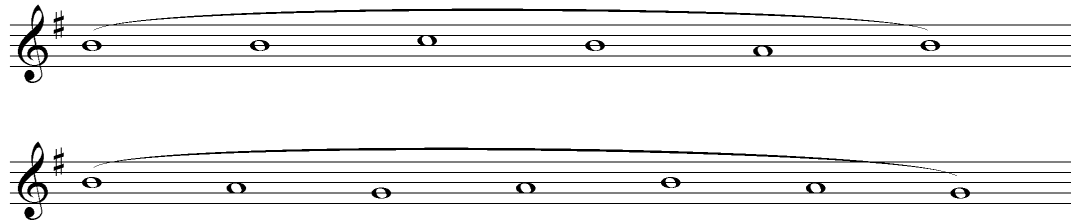
Ex. 4: Opening of second movement of *Festival Te Deum* (1872)

Sullivan conceived his third movement in two parts, the first effectively built on a set of four quasi-Baroque repetitions of a plainsong psalm which he probably took from Helmore.<sup>11</sup> The use of this melody in a quite different context, underpinned by the Baroque 'walking' bass is not

<sup>10</sup> This use of distinctive top B flats is very much reminiscent of Rossini's *Petite Messe Solonelle* which Sullivan undoubtedly knew. Sullivan had also met the composer in Paris some years earlier.

<sup>11</sup> Sullivan's teacher, Rev. Thomas Helmore (1810-1874) was responsible for a great deal of musical revival in the Church of England during the nineteenth century and particularly in the area of reviving plainsong for use in Anglican services. See footnote 6 above.

unlike the use of 'historic' early melodies in Meyerbeer's operas.



The second part, after a brief transition, is also Baroque in spirit, but is based on a set of imitative entries ('Thou art the King of Glory'), and the larger structure is also predicated on a concerto structure of orchestral ritornelli (see Ex. 5).

No. 3. CHORUS.—“THE GLORIOUS COMPANY OF THE APOSTLES.”

*Allegro con Brio.*

TREBLE.

ALTO.

TENOR (8ve. lower).

BASS.

PIANO.

*Allegro con Brio.*

*ff*

*Ped.*

\*

Ex. 5: Orchestral ritornello of third movement, *Festival Te Deum* (1872)

In stark contrast, the fourth section is an aria that might easily have been extracted from secular opera. Here the sacred and secular effortlessly and unabashedly diffuse. The soprano soloist is given a piece to sing which would not be out of place with a changed subject for the words and a



different lyric in one of the Savoy Operas, yet here, the context is one traditionally of great solemnity in its reference to the Incarnation. The melody is a typical, highly tuneful and memorable piece, so characteristic of Sullivan's emphasis on theatrical 'song' rather than motivic homogeneity:

No. 4. SOPRANO SOLO.—“WHEN THOU TOOKEST UPON THEE.”  
*Andante moderato.*  
 VOICE.  
 PIANO.  
*p*  
*stacc.*  
 When Thou  
 took - est up - on Thee to de - li - ver man, . . . Thou  
 didst not ab - hor the Vir - gin's womb.  
 When Thou hadst o - ver - come the  
*p*  
*Ped.*  
 Sullivan's "Te Deum."—Novello, Ewer and Co.'s Octavo Edition.

Ex. 6: Opening of fourth movement, *Festival Te Deum* (1872)

The bouyant accompaniment played by the strings, above which the melody is echoed at various points by the woodwind, is typical of Sullivan's operatic style when accompanying a solo singer and he almost invariably uses these devices regardless of sacred or secular contexts. It is clear from playing through the vocal score that the secularism is associated with keys markedly

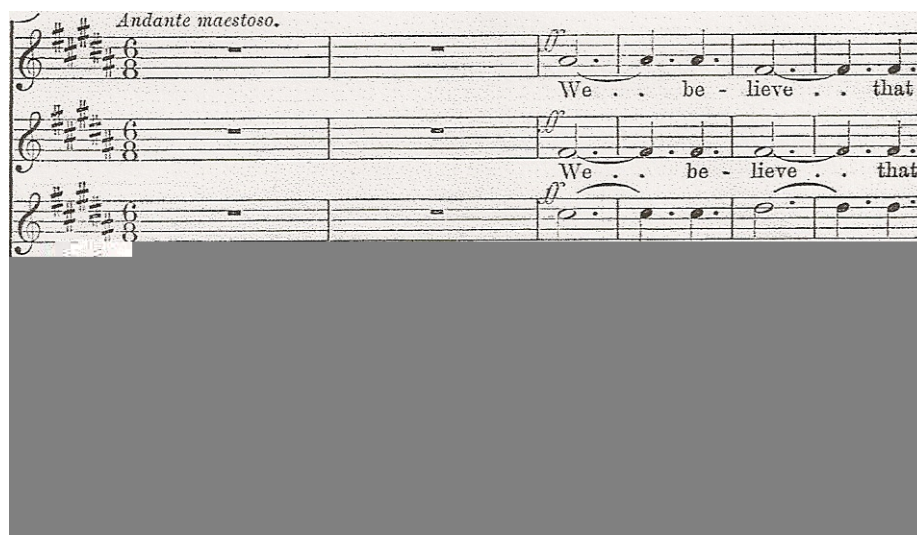
distant from the original C major tonality - noting that Sullivan here chooses the 'leading-note minor' as the key of this more pensive statement (see Table 1 to clarify this context).

Movement	Key	Text
1	C major	'We praise Thee, O God'
2	E flat major	'To Thee Cherubims'
3	G major	'The glorious company of the Apostles'
4	B minor	'When thou tookest upon Thee' (solo)
5	B major	'We believe that Thou shalt come'
6	G major	'O Lord, save thy people'
7	C major	'Vouchsafe, O Lord'

Table 1: Tonal plan of *Festival Te Deum* (1872).

The soprano solo has a very lyrical, almost operatic melody in B minor, which she shares with the obbligato oboe, and, in typical Sullivan-esque mode, this further develops operatically into a radiant B major in its final appearance, demanding a long-held top B from the soloist before it finally dies away to yet another tranquil conclusion.

As if to emphasise the 'distance' of the tonality, the fifth movement (see Ex. 7) is also cast in B. Here again, the upward fifth of the 'Dresden Amen' is reiterated, though, skilfully, Sullivan gives the initial impression of F# major before B is re-established for the main body of the chorus.



Ex. 7: Opening of the fifth movement in B major, *Festival Te Deum* (1872)

Traditionally this section of text is associated with supplication and reverence, yet Sullivan's approach is to create a form of pastoral intermezzo in 6/8 (or it might be a 'barcarolle' not out of place in *The Gondoliers*) in which the Italian operatic paradigm of extended melody and accompaniment is given to individual parts of the chorus. Sullivan's structure, though outwardly simple in its overt use of melody, is, however, highly sophisticated. A first statement of the melody in B major modulates to a reiteration in the dominant, and this in turn leads to a number of striking tonal divergences to D and F# minor, culminating with a cadence into A. This juncture of tonal repose signals a repeat of the choral introduction at which point Sullivan initiates a process of tonal 'recovery' and a more elaborate reprise of the melody in a more languid arrangement for full choir.

An appropriately solemn and dignified opening marks the opening of the fifth movement, a sufficiently dramatic gesture to illustrate the words 'We

believe that Thou shalt come to be our judge' sung in a Handelian manner. But Sullivan might almost have his tongue in his cheek at this point for, by the bar 12 the light-hearted side of Sullivan supersedes any sense of pomposity and he presents a development of the movement which is typical of his operetta style. It is indicative of the fact that even at the most solemn moments in the setting of a text Sullivan's innate sense of humour somehow always manages to break through, and here, an otherwise solemn sentiment of the text 'We believe that thou shalt come' (Ex. 8) seems reminiscent of Marco and Giuseppe in duet form from *The Gondoliers*.

No. 5. CHORUS.—"WE BELIEVE THAT THOU SHALT COME."

*Andante maestoso.*

TREBLE.  
ALTO.  
TENOR  
(Sopr. lower).  
BASS.  
ACCOMP.

We . . be - lieve . . that  
We . . be - lieve . . that  
We . . be - lieve . . that  
We . . be - lieve . . that  
We . . be - lieve . . that

*ff* (Voices only.)

Thou shalt come to be our Judge.  
Thou shalt come to be our Judge.  
Thou shalt come to be our Judge.  
Thou shalt come to be our Judge.

*p* *cres.*

We there - fore pray Thee,  
We there - fore pray Thee,  
We there - fore pray Thee,  
We there - fore pray Thee,

*dim.* *tr.* *p* *simili.*

Sullivan's "Te Deum."—Novello, Ewer and Co.'s Octavo Edition.

Ex. 8: Opening of 'We believe that thou shalt come', *Festival Te Deum* (1872)



This movement is succeeded by the penultimate section, which again returns to the home key of G major with 'O Lord save thy people'. The soprano soloist sings the opening phrase in what, later on, would develop into the familiar Savoy Opera manner of having the chorus repeat what the soloist sings; it is seen here in one of its earliest forms (Ex. 9). It may well be that, in his collaboration with W. S. Gilbert in their first opera *Thespis or the God's Grown Old* (1871), Sullivan had used this very format for some of the music in the opera. Since most of the music is lost, this cannot actually be verified, but if no such examples were contained in the opera, and Sullivan invented it himself, then certainly as far as his choral works are concerned, this appears to be the idea in its earliest form:

No. 5. SOPRANO SOLO AND CHORUS.—"O LORD, SAVE THY PEOPLE."

*Andante.*

SOLO. *p* O Lord, save Thy peo - ple, and bless . . Thine

TREBLE. *p*

ALTO. *p*

TENOR (Sopr. lower). *p*

BASS. *p*

PIANO. *Andante, p*

he - ri - tage.

CHORUS. *f*

O Lord, save Thy peo - ple, and bless . . Thine he - ri - tage.

O Lord, save Thy peo - ple, and bless Thine he - ri - tage.

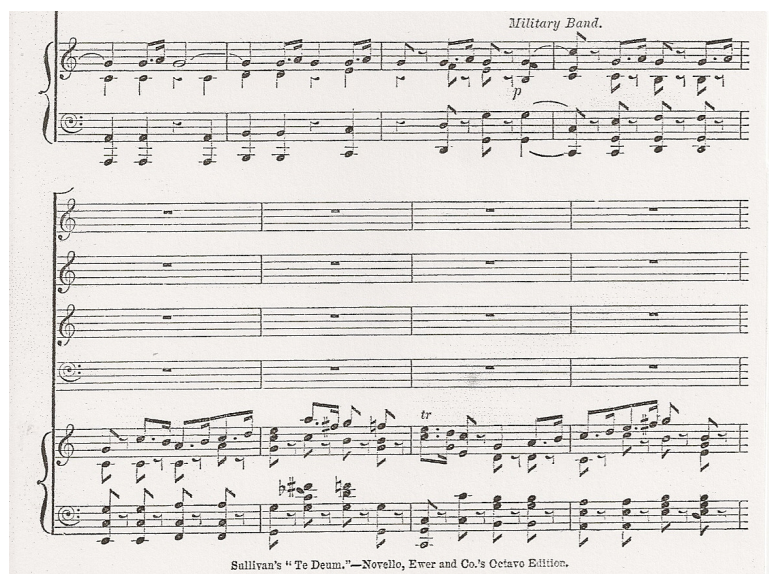
O Lord, save Thy peo - ple, and bless . . Thine he - ri - tage.

O Lord, save Thy peo - ple, and bless . . Thine he - ri - tage.

Sullivan's "Te Deum."—Norella, Ever and Co.'s Octavo Edition.

Ex. 9: Paradigm repetition of solo and chorus, *Festival Te Deum* (1872)

This is a fascinating miniature movement which creates a long crescendo before bursting into a vigorous fugue on the words 'Day by day we magnify Thee'. The momentum generated is briefly interrupted by the solo soprano's words and melody from the opening section for full chorus in semiquavers, over a restless, undulating quaver accompaniment. The fugue subject is then reintroduced, this time with full chordal harmony in order to bring this section to a vibrant close. Just when any further injection of energy seems impossible, Sullivan uses his sense of dramatic intuition by introducing the military band for the final movement (Ex. 10). The sense of surprise is palpable, not only by its contrast with the otherwise familiar orchestral background, but because we seem to be thrust into yet another facet of the secular world, this time in a military sphere more reminiscent of traditional British ceremony (such as 'Trooping the Colour') and the celebration of the Empire. In addition such pageantry itself, with its beauty of movement, precision and effect was also something appropriated by the operatic stage as can be seen in the operas of Verdi:



Ex. 10: Entry of military band, *Festival Te Deum* (1872)

What is perhaps jarring to modern ears is that Sullivan should have so happily chosen to juxtapose a more serious treatment of a traditional sacred text with something so conspicuously more worldly. Yet, as we know, this kind of disparity was common currency among composers of the theatre such as Meyerbeer, Rossini and Verdi. Indeed, Rossini's almost self-conscious juxtaposition of the *stile severo* with grand opera in his *Petite Messe Solonelle* (composed in 1863, less than a decade before Sullivan's) provides just such an example.

The last section begins with the opening bars of the works orchestral introduction as if to accentuate the cyclic nature of Sullivan's larger structural concept. This time, however, the sopranos begin by singing a *complete* version of ST ANNE which is succeeded by a fugal paragraph revealing considerable fluency and invention. Indeed, this treatment seems to suggest a kind of

homogeneous unity of musical thought that was absent in some of his later, more ambitious choral works. Led by the basses on the words 'O let Thy Mercy lighten upon us' this contrapuntal mindset is abruptly interrupted by the interjection of the military band music featuring an entirely different kind of musical aesthetic and one that is thrown further into relief by the recurrence of ST ANNE, first as a *cantus firmus* and latterly as an operatic chorus in unison (though using the text of the familiar Anglican response 'O Lord, save the Queen: And mercifully hear us as we call upon Thee' as a convenient substitute for the national anthem). In this instance Young has pointed out that at the time of writing in 1872, the hymn tune ST ANNE occupied the place of a subsidiary national anthem and 'hence Sullivan, in the last movement of his *Te Deum*, by exploiting the stereophonic possibilities of the Crystal Palace...was at long range picking up where the Venetians of the seventeenth century left off'.<sup>12</sup> Young also reinforced his argument for this context by suggesting that Sullivan 'as well as presenting the hungry ear with sonorous splendours of Berlioz proportions, has the ring of truth: this is the English people in the high summer of Victorian optimism'.<sup>13</sup> It is also of coincidental interest to note that 1872 was the year in which Sullivan wrote his hymn tune ST GERTRUDE ('Onward Christian Soldiers') which was later to be used in his third and greatest *Te Deum* and used in a similar manner to

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<sup>12</sup> Young, 91.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

his use of ST ANNE in 1899.

A review of the first performance of the 1872 *Te Deum* in *The Times* pointed out that it was attended by 26,198 people,<sup>14</sup> which was a sign of the times and a significant factor in the success of Sullivan's serious choral works in his lifetime. The reviewer commented that: 'the performance generally, under the direction of Mr Manns, was, all things considered, remarkably good. At the end Mr Sullivan was loudly called for, and on appearing in the orchestra was uproariously cheered, the members of the band and chorus heartily joining in the demonstration.'<sup>15</sup> By 1891, the *Festival Te Deum* as it had become known, had established itself as one of Sullivan's most frequently performed works, in spite of it having been written for a specific occasion nineteen years earlier. However, Sullivan was never short of critics and in *The Times* for Thursday 10 September 1891, the following article appeared:

In the most satisfactory number of Sir Arthur Sullivan's *Te Deum* with which the morning concert concluded, Mme Albani again distinguished herself, delivering the passage 'To Thee cherubim and seraphim' with fervent expression. This work, which, it will be remembered, was written for a performance at the Crystal Palace in 1872 in honour of the recovery of the Prince of Wales, contains several sections that are not worthy of the composer and the occasion for which it was intended, and it may be held to form an excuse, though not perhaps a valid one, for the extremely secular character of some of the numbers, notably the curiously inappropriate 'We therefore pray Thee' and the military march at the close, with its combined hymn tune of St Anne. The conductor, or whoever was responsible, was perfectly justified in altering the incredibly unskilful accentuation of the word 'honourable', which, however, is only one among many instances of a carelessness that

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<sup>14</sup> *The Times*, 29 April 1872.

<sup>15</sup> *The Times*, 2 May 1872.

almost must have proceeded from haste.<sup>16</sup>

The mixture of praise and criticism followed Sullivan throughout his career and in the case of this work, from the time that the piece was first announced to the public on Monday 29 April 1872. On that date, *The Times* reported that 'the Grand Festival in celebration of the recovery of His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales is announced for Wednesday afternoon. Music will be largely represented. The concert is to be given by the Handel orchestra and the London contingent of the Handel Festival Choir, joined by the choir of the Crystal Palace, with an orchestra to match - altogether above 2000 singers and players - will aid the performance'. The programme was divided into two parts, the first (after the National Anthem) was devoted to the Sullivan *Festival Te Deum*, of which *The Times* informed its readership that 'Her Majesty the Queen has graciously accepted the dedication' and which was apparently composed at the instigation of the directors of the Crystal Palace, especially for the occasion. The second part of the concert consisted of miscellaneous selections of choral, solo-vocal and instrumental pieces for which the services of Middle Titiens, Signiors Faucell and Foli were secured and the whole programme ended appropriately enough with *God Bless the Prince of Wales* by Brinley Richards, the soloists once again being Middle Titiens, who judging by the large number of times she sang in works by Sullivan must have been as much a favourite artist of his as she was with the general public. Indeed, time

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<sup>16</sup> *The Times*, 10 September 1891.

and again the same names of his oratorio soloists appear in the programmes and one of the few occasions when a performance of *The Golden Legend* (given in Germany at a Royal concert) became a flop for him was when he could not secure the services of his favourite soloists,<sup>17</sup> and his dignity was only restored when a second performance was given with the appropriate soloists (see Chapter Five). Of the *Festival Te Deum*, *The Times* goes on to say that:

The choral portions of Mr Sullivan's 'Te Deum' were rehearsed, for the second time, at Exeter Hall on Saturday evening when a marked effect was produced by more than one number - especially 'Holy Holy Holy' and the final chorus in which the composer has appropriately interpolated a 'Domino Salvan fac Reginum' with full chorus, full orchestra, military band, organ & co.'<sup>18</sup>

As usual, the inclusion of the military band proved both unusual and popular among some critics as much as it was deplored by others. A performance of the work was given at Norwich and Henry C. Lunn reviewed it for *The Musical Times* in October 1872. This time it was given as part of the Norwich Festival where Sullivan had had some of his most notable successes, particularly with the *In Memoriam* Overture<sup>19</sup>. Lunn pointed out to his readers that the 'Norwich Festival commenced on Monday 16<sup>th</sup> September in St Andrew's Hall - (after an excellent performance of the National Anthem conducted by Benedict) Sullivan's Te Deum was given conducted by the composer.' Apparently the work had a much better performance than the

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<sup>17</sup>*The Musical Times*, 1 May 1887. 265-6

<sup>18</sup>*The Musical Times*, October 1872.

<sup>19</sup>*In Memoriam* was premiered at the Norwich Festival on 30<sup>th</sup> October 1866.

original production at the Crystal Palace, largely because a decisive chorus gave remarkable attention to the management of the tone and sang with 'much clearness'. Middle Titiens was there, of course, and 'took the utmost pains with the soprano solo, creating a marked effect in her solo *When Thou tookest* which was listened to throughout with a devout attention which showed 'a deeper appreciation of the composer's power than can be manifested by any audible marks of approval'.<sup>20</sup> The recovery of the Prince of Wales having been over and done with, it was left to the merits of the music alone to speak for the work and Lunn pointed out that 'there can be no question that as it has fairly made the mark at Norwich, surrounded by the standard compositions of the greatest- the Festival Te Deum may be said to have passed the ordeal of criticism as will no doubt be estimated as its true worth long after the reason for its title has been forgotten'. In 1896 the *Annals of the Norfolk and Norwich Triennial Musical Festival* was written as an account of the first seventy years of the festival and gave an interesting record of the works and actions of Sullivan and other composers at such events. The authors, Robin H. Legge and W. E. Hansell pointed out that 'when the history of English music comes to be written it will be found that the provincial festivals have contributed by far the greater part of the best compositions of the past century and a half'.<sup>21</sup> This draws attention to the fact that the festivals

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<sup>20</sup> *Musical Times* (October 1872), 10

<sup>21</sup> Legge, R. H. & Hasell W. E., *Annals of the Norfolk and Norwich Triennial Festival* (Norwich,



were not just grand and spectacular musical occasions which used the resources of large choirs and orchestras and which were popular social occasions, but also provided opportunities for British composers to write new works which were commissioned specifically for the festivals. This was of immense value to Sullivan in giving him the chance not only to produce serious works but often to conduct them as well. When he conducted the *Te Deum* at Norwich he conducted a full rehearsal on the Monday morning and the work was well received by the critics. In the *Norwich Mercury* one critic noted:

Mr Sullivan being not less skillful with the baton than with the pen met with a warm reception on coming forward to direct the programme - the skill with which the necessary assimilation of things new and old has been made -- a noble work and a credit to English music-- heard throughout with unflagging attention and at its close Mr Sullivan retired from the platform amid warm general applause.<sup>22</sup>

Sullivan's conducting technique was not always greeted with such aplomb by critics. *The Argus* described the work as 'some of the best music of the week. The *Te Deum* is in all things truly original - there is not a musical phrase which the oldest hypercritic can say he has heard before. Mr Sullivan uses all the resources of his art in a thoroughly striking and original manner'<sup>23</sup>. It is this original thinking which is the main contribution by Sullivan to the traditional nineteenth century music genres which makes his works of such

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1896), 1.

<sup>22</sup> *Norwich Mercury*, 17 September 1872.

<sup>23</sup> *The Argus*, 18 September 1872.

historical importance to the musical history of that century. He is not content to write merely in the accepted styles and conventions of his predecessors, but has a real desire to add to the genre and to develop it. This he does, but the lightness of the style he writes in is something of a pitfall on occasion. However in the 1896 *Annals*, the authors were able to write that 'Sullivan's Te Deum enjoyed no greater success than that usually metes out to a piece d'occasion, and it has long ago been relegated to limbo.' The second review of the original performance appeared in *The Times* of 2 May:

The concert in the 'Handel Orchestra' yesterday began about 4 o'clock. On the arrival of the distinguished party who occupied the Royal box the National Anthem was played by a chorus and orchestra upwards of 2000 in number, and then followed the new 'Te Deum Laudamus' written by Mr Arthur Sullivan and dedicated by permission - a favour seldom awarded - to Her Majesty the Queen. Of the new work by our young countryman we are glad to be able to speak in terms of unqualified praise. It is not only, in our opinion, the most finished composition, for which we are indebted to his pen, but an honour to English art.<sup>24</sup>

Here, once again, the concept of the military band was seized on as the most conspicuous part of the work, the reviewer pointing that 'the military band is not an absolute necessity, but may be employed ad libitum, its effect, however, as introduced in the last chorus, is so bright and uncommon that it would be a pity to present the work without it'. The fact remains that not only is it 'uncommon', it is unique and the invention of Sullivan's theatrical mindset which could not help itself from writing music in a more popular genre even within the setting of a serious choral piece which was initially

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<sup>24</sup> *The Times*, 2 May 1872.

intended for the most serious of occasions.

At the start of his career as a composer of choral music Sullivan had laid down a number of stylistic and aesthetic principles which would point to his future as a successful composer of theatrical music. Strikingly, at the end of his life, a commission was given for another setting of the *Te Deum* and Sullivan once again used a hymn tune at the heart of the piece. This time, however, the tune would be one of his own, arguably as well known as ST ANNE, but springing from a much more contemporary context.

Despite the fact that the 1890s had not been as successful for Sullivan as the previous decades, by and large, he was still Britain's most famous and respected musician in 1900. Distinguished amongst his notable supporters, including Mackenzie and Elgar, were England's principal church musicians John Stainer, George Martin and Sir Frederick Bridge. Martin was organist at St Paul's Cathedral and Bridge was at Westminster Abbey. Both played a part in keeping Sullivan's name a part of the celebrations of 1902 which were to mark the ending of the Boar War. Despite the lack of significant contributions to church music in his later life (he had not written a piece for liturgical purposes since 1883) his last, and perhaps best, anthem 'Who is like unto Thee O Lord', two notable exceptions being the Jubilee Hymn 'O King of Kings' (called JUBILEE) which was sung in every church in the land on Diamond Jubilee Day in 1897 and the funeral anthem 'Wreaths for our graves' (which

was added to the staged version of *The Martyr of Antioch*<sup>25</sup>), Sullivan retained his influence in the London church music world. He had had connections at St Paul's with the Festival of the Sons of the Clergy for many years and one of his tutors at the Royal Academy of music, John Goss, had been organist between 1838 and 1872. Sullivan had known Goss's successor Stainer since childhood. Dibble recounts the story of the two of them being in the same organ loft as boys, alongside their master Goss, and at Stainer's retirement dinner in 1888 Sullivan was the guest speaker.<sup>26</sup> George Martin, Stainer's successor, kept Sullivan in the cathedral lists where he had had a place since the 1860s. The last notable commission was in 1887 when Stainer invited Sullivan to compose an evening service. Sullivan declined the offer since, by his own admission, he seemed unable to set the words of the Magnificat in a way that would satisfy him. He protested that he had tried to set the words, but simply could not make progress on any one subject<sup>27</sup>.

Sullivan was asked to write the *Te Deum* on 26 May 1900, almost exactly six months before his death. As he recorded in his diary 'Sir George Martin and Colonel Arthur Collins came to see me, former invited me on behalf of the Dean and Chapter to write a Te Deum for Grand Peace Service

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<sup>25</sup> 'Wreathes for our Graves' replaced 'Brother thou art gone before us' in the score when *The Martyr of Antioch* was presented in a staged version by the Carl Rosa Opera Company (with Sullivan's permission) in 1898. The reason why it was substituted is not clear, but it may have been because of the length of the piece which would have held up the stage action had it been included and performed in its entirety. It was, however, sung at the composer's funeral at his own request.

<sup>26</sup> Dibble, J. Stainer a Life in Music (The Bodley Press 2007) 35.

<sup>27</sup> Sullivan did set the words of the Magnificat in his oratorio *The Light of the World*, but for solo soprano rather than chorus.

when war is over. Consented to try and see what I could do'.<sup>28</sup> Somewhat unusual for Sullivan, he set about composing the work almost at once, perhaps knowing in his heart that he might not have much longer to live. The haste was also due to the fact that the patriotic Sullivan was convinced that the work would be needed sooner rather than later as the end of the war might be imminent. In the event, he was mistaken; the war went on for a further eighteen months, by which time the composer was dead. After a short visit to Germany, Sullivan began work and in doing so delayed any substantial progress with what was to be his last piece for the Savoy Theatre, *The Emerald Isle*. At any rate, the *Boer War Te Deum* was to be his last completed work. Once handed over to Martin, only the end of the war would allow its first performance, but before this could happen, both Bridge and Martin (and Stainer) were pall-bearers who carried Sullivan's coffin into the crypt at St Paul's.

On receiving the manuscript, Martin wrote to Sullivan saying:

This is splendid! I am delighted to hear you have entirely finished the Te Deum and I am longing to see it. As to the printing, I should like it to proceed - providing it can be done entirely secretly - without anyone knowing for what occasion it is intended. This war drags on and may last some time yet - I cannot thank you sufficiently for writing it and I hope the performance when it takes place will not be disagreeable to you.<sup>29</sup>

The public first became aware of the new piece in a letter written to *The Times*

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<sup>28</sup> Sullivan Diary entry for 26.5.1900

<sup>29</sup> Letter from Sir George Martin to Sullivan, 14 August 1900 reprinted in Allen, R., *Sir Arthur Sullivan, Composer and Personage* (Chappel & Company, London 1975) 184.

just a few day's after Sullivan's death on 22<sup>n</sup> November 1900. The letter, published on 29<sup>t</sup> November declared:

Some time ago, with the sanction of the Dean and Chapter of St Paul's Cathedral, I approached the late Sir Arthur Sullivan on the subject of a Thanksgiving *Te Deum* suitable for performance in St. Paul's and other churches in the event of a successful termination in the war in South Africa. I am glad to say that he took the matter up warmly, and as I well know, he worked devotedly and consistently on this composition. A little more than a month ago (he was very ill then) he played his short work to me on the piano and we discussed with great minuteness the exact strength he required as to his instruments, chorus and co. I am happy to say that he has left in my hands the score, which is finished to the smallest detail. This was his last completed work. Thus the lad who received most of his early musical education in the church and who afterwards won such phenomenal popularity, not only where the English language is spoken, but in other countries, devoted his last effort to his Queen, to his church and to his country.<sup>30</sup>

The letter written by Martin seems to reflect the admiration he obviously felt for Sullivan. The *Te Deum* came exactly fifty years after Sullivan's first anthem for the church and in its unforced dignity, solemnity and grandeur it returns to the theme of praising God. The first performance of the work eventually came on the 8 June 1902 and the service of thanksgiving was given a full account in *The Times* of Monday 9 June:

Meanwhile, while the congregation were waiting for the arrival of the King, the band of the Grenadier Guards played among other things Sullivan's Imperial March. The whole congregation had risen on the arrival of the King and Queen and joined heartily in singing the hymn 'Onward Christian Soldiers' to Sullivan's familiar tune, as the procession, headed by the uplifted cross, moved slowly up the middle aisle of the nave. Sir George Martin, the organist and choirmaster of the Cathedral, wearing his robes as Doctor of Music, led the way and conducted the music of the surplice-clad choristers.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> *The Times*, 29 November 1900

<sup>31</sup> *The Times*, 9 June 1902.

After the reading of a lesson, the Bishop, deans and canons took their places and the *Te Deum* was heard for the first time: 'The musical version selected was the last completed work of the late Sir Arthur Sullivan and was written expressly for a peace thanksgiving. The orchestral part is intended to be performed by organ, brass instruments and strings, but the notice being short, it was found impossible to secure a complete orchestration and brass instruments and organ alone was employed.'<sup>32</sup> Given the length of time that Martin had had the work and that the occasion was a national one in the presence of the King and Queen, the lack of available string players for the occasion seems almost incredible and would certainly have not been as agreeable to Sullivan as Martin had hoped in his letter. The cathedral staff were keen to hold the service as soon as possible after the declaration of peace and so the central feature of the work, as in all Sullivan's choral works, the distinctive and appropriate orchestration was left unheard at this particular performance.

The concept of the *Boer War Te Deum* is essentially different in nature from that of the 1872 canvas. For one thing, the work is entirely *choral* in nature, and the setting of the text is continuous rather than divided up into individual movements. In this sense Sullivan exercised a more homogeneous approach to the structure and this is particularly clear from the sense of thematic recapitulation of the opening music for the 'finale' (see p. 80) which

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

reiterates not only the principal material but the key as well ('Vouchsafe, O Lord') and Sullivan creates a more closely controlled tonal matrix of keys across the musical structure (see Table 2), making particular use of F minor/major (see pp. 8 and 21) C major/minor and its Neapolitan, D flat (see pp. 6-7 and 14). This process is also further complemented by a more advanced harmonic language.

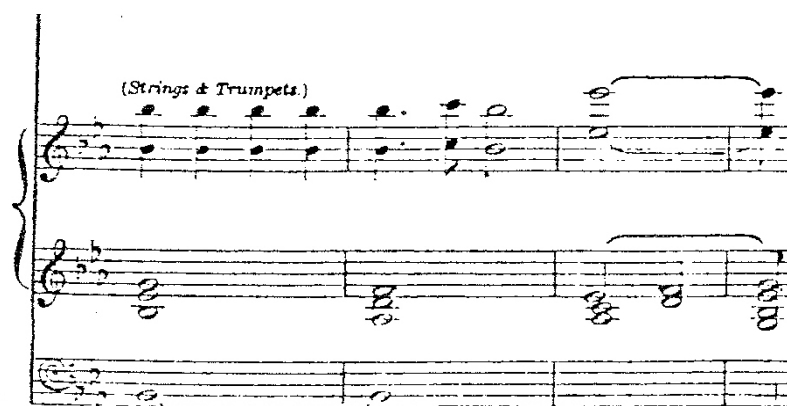
Episode	Key	Text
1	E flat major	'We praise Thee, O God' (hymn)
2	F minor/A flat	'The glorious company of the Apostles'
3	C minor	'When Thou tookest upon Thee' (cortège)
4	B flat major	'O Lord, save Thy people' (prayer)
5	E flat major	'Vouchsafe, O Lord' (Finale and reprise)

Table 2: Scheme of *Boer War Te Deum*.

What the two settings of the *Te Deum* share, however, is the scheme of partial allusion to a core hymn tune - in this case ST GERTRUDE - which is then given full presentation in the conclusion. Sullivan's use of ST GERTRUDE served several purposes. The hymn tune (Ex. 12) was exceptionally well known since its introduction in *Church Hymns* of 1874 as was its association with a form of 'muscular Christianity' through Sabine Baring-Gould's text; but perhaps even more potent was the even more popular refrain 'Onward, Christian soldiers' whose mark-like character



Sullivan wedded to a typical 'oom-pah' bass. As can be observed, too, in Sullivan's tune, the tune may outwardly have seemed simple to a typical member of the congregation, but it also included a number of more complex elements such as fanfare calls for battle, marshal motives (notably the upward arpeggio) and some interesting voice exchange. This marshal element, infused with a missionary religious zeal, made reference to the steadfast purpose of the British army in South Africa. The cause was driven by a sense of Christian moral right which the references to ST GERTRUDE underscored. Last but not least, it was surely Sullivan's intention to create a kind of theatrical tableau (a genre quite familiar to him in other patriotic contexts, notably his ballet *Victoria and Merrie England* of 1897). In this sense, the use of its first musical phrase (see Ex. 11) would have been an immediate attraction to its audience:



Ex. 11: Bars 5-8 of the *Boer War Te Deum*.

exchange of parts

fanfare material

9

17 REFRAIN (Chorus)

opening material in inner part

'oompah' bass (march)

21

Ex. 12: Sullivan's ST GERTRUDE.

The hymn-like nature of much of the choral material in the first section is one of several thematic 'types' that characterise Sullivan's 'tableau'. The third section ('When Thou tookest upon Thee') has a funeral aura which is underpinned by a typically theatrical cortège rhythm. The fourth episode ('Lord, save Thy people') is a richer eight-part prayerful supplication, essentially unaccompanied save for iterations of the marshal arpeggio, while the last section, as stated above, is a grand 'finale' in which thematic recapitulation is combined with the full rendition of ST GERTRUDE in the

orchestra (see p. 37), though even here, the platitude of this statement is avoided by the understated version at 'p' (p. 33) in which the hushed orchestra accompanies a variegated texture of contrapuntal interjections from the chorus.

After being performed on the occasion for which it was intended, the *Te Deum* initially seemed to have plans for an extended life. According to *The Times*, the *Te Deum* was intended to be 'performed on July 3<sup>rd</sup> when the King visits St Paul's to give thanks after his Coronation and it will then be performed by a very largely augmented choir and orchestra'. It seems from this announcement, that there were plans for two Coronation thanksgiving services - one soon after the Coronation not attended by the King, and the second, sometime after, attended by him. In the event, the Coronation Thanksgiving Service was not given on 3 July as the Coronation itself was delayed from 26 June to 9 August owing to the king's operation for appendicitis. The first Coronation Thanksgiving at St Paul's not attended by the King on 10 August featured a setting of the *Te Deum*, not by Sullivan, but by Stanford and the *Te Deum* at the official thanksgiving attended by the King on 26 October was by Martin himself. This meant that the *Boer War Te Deum* by Sullivan was allowed quietly to disappear. The score was published in both vocal and full score, but the events surrounding the Coronation seem to have overshadowed the work. Had Sullivan lived longer, the work would probably have found a place in the repertoire of the various festival choirs for

a number of years, just as its 1872 predecessor had.

The *Pall Mall Gazette* was most enthusiastic, remarking that 'the work, I take it, will rank among the best of Sir Arthur Sullivan's ecclesiastical compositions; it is full of intense fervour and its musicianship is not short of splendid'.<sup>33</sup> *The Sketch* noted that 'it was Sir Arthur Sullivan's last finished work and is distinguished by the singular vitality which inspired all his best work when he was profoundly moved'.<sup>34</sup> It may be that in this piece Sullivan wanted to illustrate his personal commitment to the Christian faith at the end of his life and certainly his use of the popular hymn ST GERTRUDE throughout the *Te Deum* is the most prominent self-reference that Sullivan ever allowed himself to make in his works, perhaps deliberately accentuating a love of his church and his country as Marin had suggested in his letter.

Benedict Taylor has written that within the *Festival Te Deum* Sullivan's work is:

relatively subdued, more self-effacing - a compact single movement work of about a quarter of an hour in duration - its musical sections corresponding to the traditional divisions of the liturgical text run into one another without a break. A degree of unity across the sectional, evolving structure is provided by cyclical features-- and the use of common or related material for successive sections--of possible even greater structural cohesiveness of march-like figures throughout the work. Principally rhythmic but often also employing repeated notes or arpeggio figures characteristic of *Onward Christian Soldiers*-- it is a work whose grandeur and restrained dignity have made it cherished and esteemed.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> The Pall Mall Gazette 9 June 1902

<sup>34</sup> The Sketch 12 June 1902

<sup>35</sup> *Musical Times* 8 July 1902

Contemporary critics also reviewed the piece favourably. The *Daily Telegraph* in its report of the thanksgiving service said of it that 'the service reached its central episode with a Te Deum sung to Sir Arthur Sullivan's music deprived, through the absence of strings, of its full orchestral beauty, but wrought up from exquisite tenderness to a pitch of dignity and strength'. The *Musical Times* was likewise favourably impressed by the piece:

In every passage of the score we can trace the hand of the skilled musician, once a Chorister of the Chapel Royal. Moreover, the work is impregnated with a robustness distinctly national in the directness of its diatonic expression. The introduction of the composer's familiar hymn tune *Onward Christian Soldiers* - first in fragments and afterwards in its entirety - infuses a military element into this Thanksgiving Te Deum, the significance of which is obvious.<sup>36</sup>

Evidently Sullivan's last major choral work found an appreciative audience, but it would be true to say that, after the appearances of Elgar's setting of 1897, Stanford's Op. 66 large-scale setting of 1898, Parry's equally large-scale conception for the Three Choirs and his liturgically conceived setting for the Coronation of 1911, Sullivan's more dramatically-imagined canvases went out of fashion, not least because their intuitively theatrical style, more redolent of the Italian stage, was eclipsed by a more muscular Anglican model informed by German symphonic paradigms. Indeed, the *Boer War Te Deum* of 1900, written the same year as the composer's death, also marked a critical watershed in which the ascendancy of German musical values was sustained by a generation of composers infused by the confidence

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

of the new Edwardian era, and the critical establishment were hard-pressed to give credence to choral works based on a style of Victorian hymn of which they disapproved.

## CHAPTER THREE

### ORATORIO:

#### ‘THE LONG AND THE SHORT OF IT’<sup>1</sup>

#### *The Prodigal Son* and *The Light of the World*

Sullivan’s contribution to the traditions of oratorio consists of two works, the one rather short (by the standards of most nineteenth-century oratorios) and the other extremely long. If we take the Victorian definition of oratorio as being a choral work which takes its text strictly from Holy Scripture, then the relatively short work *The Prodigal Son* (1869) and the extremely long score of *The Light of the World* (1873) are the only two of Sullivan’s extant choral works that may rightly be said to be defined as coming within the genre.

Sullivan was twenty-seven when he wrote *The Prodigal Son* in 1869 and, like many of his early works, the piece shows the influence of Mendelssohn. The work was written at a time when expectations of him were rising meteorically. After the composition of *Kenilworth* (and an unpublished opera *The Sapphire Necklace*) he enjoyed approbation with his first comic opera *Cox and Box* in 1866, and the same year witnessed the completion of his ‘Irish’ Symphony, a work which, in many ways, was the composer’s testimony to the academic world in terms of its technical prowess and the handling of large-scale instrumental structure. Having produced

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<sup>1</sup> Gilbert, W. S., from the finale of Act 2 of *Princess Ida*.

this catalogue of works, it was therefore no surprise, when he received a commission to compose an oratorio for Worcester Three Choirs Festival. The idea of oratorio clearly claimed some interest for Sullivan and the composition of this commission marked a continuation of his engagement with choral music and the decline of his instrumental composition. The fact that he consented to produce an oratorio for Worcester (and performed with three top soloists of the time, Titjens, Trebelli and Sims Reeves) also instigated a period of anticipation amongst the British public, since relatively little native oratorio had been composed during the 1850s and 1860s in the aftermath of Mendelssohn-fever with *Elijah*.<sup>2</sup> Handel's oratorio remained immensely popular as did Spohr's *The Last Judgment* and *By the Waters of Babylon*. As Willeby noted in his substantial essay about Sullivan in 1893:

The Press recognised that his ability had been put to a severer test than it ever had before. He had, they said, long been the hope of English music - the man whose promise for the future was most trustworthy. Till then they had looked to him expectantly, now although they expected still, it was with a difference.<sup>3</sup>

The choice of the text was almost certainly shaped by the fact that the Three Choirs commission was for a 'first half' work. In other words it was for a shorter oratorio rather than the more common epic works of two hours or more favoured not only by the Three Choirs and Norwich, but particularly by Birmingham. A concise text was

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<sup>2</sup> Henry Hugo Pierson's oratorio *Jerusalem* appeared at Norwich in 1850 and was considered a modern and idiosyncratic work outside the normal experience of English oratorio. It was only after Sullivan's *Prodigal Son* that a spate of oratorios in the 1870s by Macfarren, Goldschmidt and Benedict gathered momentum. Sterndale Bennett's cantata, *The Woman of Samaria*, written for Birmingham in 1867, may, however, have provided a useful precedent.

<sup>3</sup> Willeby, *Masters of English Music* (James R. Osgood, McIlvaine & Co.: London, 1893), 33.



therefore required. *The Prodigal Son* was composed rapidly in three weeks.<sup>4</sup> As Sullivan remarked: 'I seemed to work without fatigue through the day, through the night again, and then well into the next day till my hand grew shaky with fatigue which I did not otherwise feel'.<sup>5</sup> For the narrative Sullivan chose his own text from the Gospel of Luke. However, being a relatively short scriptural text, it was necessary to flesh out the oratorio with other biblical 'commentary' principally from Isaiah and the Psalms, though other texts from Genesis, Proverbs, the Gospel of St John and St Paul's letter to the Hebrews were also included. In his preface to the work, Sullivan wrote:

It is a remarkable fact that the parable of The Prodigal Son should never have been chosen as the text of a sacred musical composition. The story is so natural and pathetic, and forms so complete a whole; its lesson is so thoroughly Christian; the characters, though few, are so perfectly contrasted and the opportunity for the employment of 'local colour' is so obvious, that it is indeed astonishing to find the subject so long overlooked. The only drawback is the shortness of the narrative and the consequent necessity for filling it out with material drawn from elsewhere. In the present case this has been done as sparingly as possible and entirely from the Scriptures. In so doing, the Prodigal himself has been conceived, not as of a naturally brutish and depraved disposition - a view taken by many commentators with apparently little knowledge of human nature and no recollection of their own youthful impulses; but rather as a buoyant, restless youth, tired of the monotony of home and anxious to see what lay beyond the narrow confine's of his father's farm, going forth in the confidence of his own simplicity and ardour and led gradually away into follies and sins which, at the outset, would have been as distasteful as they were strange to him. The episode with which the parable concludes has no dramatic connection with the former position and therefore has not been treated.

Arthur S. Sullivan.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Brahms, C., *Gilbert and Sullivan: Lost Chords and Discords* (Wieidenfeld & Nicholson: London, 1975), 50.

<sup>5</sup> Brahms, 1975. 50

<sup>6</sup> Vocal Score, Boosey & Co 1869.

This is very telling, given Sullivan's nature and personality. A lifelong member of the Church of England, Sullivan's religious standpoint was nevertheless tempered by a love of life and worldliness, and it seems significant that in his choice of text for his oratorios he favoured the *physical* worldliness of the main character of the Prodigal Son (and likewise, in *The Light of the World*, that he concentrated on Jesus's earthly ministry rather than the more spiritual aspects). Indeed, in *The Prodigal Son*, Sullivan was seeking human interest as a central feature of the work rather than a purely didactic stance that the phenomenon of the parable demanded. This, of course, was typical of his operatic cast of mind.

For the main narrative Sullivan naturally utilised verses 11 to 24 from Chapter 15 of St Luke's Gospel, but, as his preface points out, he was keen to exclude the more problematic section of verses 25 to 32, where the Prodigal Son's brother (understandably) finds cause to complain. This, as he noted, had 'no dramatic connection with the former and principal portion, and therefore has not been treated.' In other words, Sullivan considered that the more questioning nature of this part of the text would militate against the climax and buoyant ending to the work and would be dramatically antipathetical. Hence, it was left out. Ultimately it would require a theatrical genius of Benjamin Britten's capacity to rise to this challenge in his Church Parable, *The Prodigal Son*, of 1968. Here, not only is the Prodigal Son's homecoming a cause for rejoicing, but the sentiment of reconciliation and the father's love for his whole family a cause for celebration.

Sullivan conducted the premiere of *The Prodigal Son* at the age of 27 and it is

considered by many as being his first major choral work. It was as well received by the critics and by the public as *Kenilworth* had been in 1864. The first review of the premiere performance was printed in *The Times* and started with the announcement that:

Mr Arthur S. Sullivan's new sacred cantata built upon the parable of the prodigal son was this morning performed in the cathedral [Worcester] under such advantageous conditions as might have insured a success for a composition of far less worth. But the cantata, a work of very light pretensions, the most thoughtful, finished and engaging which has come from the pen of its composer, owes success to its intrinsic merits; and the careful production of such a work would alone have rendered this meeting of 1869 memorable among the Festival of the Choirs.<sup>7</sup>

It is significant that the reviewer remarked on the 'light pretensions' of Sullivan's score. The approach to the text, and the message, was not for Sullivan one that required pages of unremitting pathos (as one might find in Wagner), but one that played upon the sympathetic human emotions of its two central characters, the Prodigal Son and his father in a more lyrical sense, in which melody and song were imperatives. What was 'deferred until tomorrow' duly appeared in a second review and commenting on the events of 10 September the reviewer stated:

The high merits of Mr Sullivan's new cantata to the successful production of which in the cathedral a passing reference was made, seem to be unanimously recognized. A great deal more might be written about it than the limits of a mere report will allow ---Mr Sullivan has refrained from prefacing his cantata with a fully developed overture which would necessarily have been out of proportion. In place of this, however, he has written a short introduction, chiefly for string instruments, the character of which suggests the quaint pastoral life of the father, his two sons and their dependants. Nothing can be happier than this, or than the episodic transition reminding us that there may be smothered dissatisfaction even in so seemingly contented a home.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> *The Times*, 9 September 1869.

<sup>8</sup> *The Times*, 11 September 1869.

The work's shorter length interestingly provoked the reviewer (and he was not alone) into calling the work a cantata, an understandable impression, since the conciseness of Sullivan's canvas differed only slightly from Sterndale Bennett's earlier work. Nevertheless, the work's memorability invoked a much greater approval. 'We have no hesitation in pronouncing it not merely the best and most carefully finished work of its composer, but a work that would do credit to any composer now living'.<sup>9</sup> In 1870 there was a performance of *The Prodigal Son* in Manchester and it was repeated by popular request at the Three Choirs Festival in Hereford in September of that year. In November it was performed in Edinburgh with Sullivan conducting, and all of these performances give evidence of its immense popularity in the concert hall. Moreover, during Sullivan's visit to New York for the premiere of *The Pirates of Penzance*, scheduled for December 1879, he conducted a performance on 23 November by the Handel and Haydn Society in Boston and sometime later still in 1885 (the year of the premiere of *The Mikado*), the Canadian premiere took place in London, Ontario. It was also revived in 1889 at the Three Choirs Festival in Worcester, by which time the context of Three Choirs choral works had markedly changed with the advent of more contemporary Teutonic-influenced works by Parry and Stanford. The critical impression at this stage, however, was of a less complex work that might be better suited to more amateur choirs:

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

Of the four morning performances in the cathedral, today's was, perhaps, the most popular for the group of works chosen was representative of the widely different schools, though all were of modern origin. Produced at the Worcester festival exactly twenty years ago, Sir Arthur Sullivan's short oratorio *The Prodigal Son* has not been heard for a considerable number of years. The neglect into which it has fallen is due to no absence of interest in the work itself, and it is fairly certain that none of the early works of the composer of *The Golden Legend* could fail to attract a large audience, even apart from the continued popularity of his comic operas. The reasons for this neglect must be looked for elsewhere, but, whatever they may be, for the present revival amateurs may well be grateful.<sup>10</sup>

This judgment may have been true, but the work remained a conspicuous part of the choral repertory in England until the First World War when it largely dropped out of fashion and seems to have quietly disappeared from the repertoire of choral societies and festival choirs. The Introduction to *The Prodigal Son*, in E flat major, has much in common with the kind of orchestral prelude used in Verdi's operas of the 1850s. Short, uncomplicated, and dominated by melody, it is a pastoral evocation (one which has, in many ways, an affinity with those pastoral Victorian pictures of summer harvests, endless warm days and joy in the open air) in which, one assumes, the father and his two sons happily labour, enjoying happiness in their work and prosperity. Only in the closing bars as the tonality shifts ominously to the dominant of D (with its minor inflections), replete with portentous horn calls, are we reminded of a conflicting sentiment of the son, to quote Sullivan, 'tired of the monotony of home and anxious to see what lay behind the narrow confines of his father's farm' (see above).

The first chorus, in D major, opens with verse 10 of the parable 'There is joy in

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<sup>10</sup> *The Times*, 6 September 1889.

the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth' (Example 1). The model, though somewhat simpler harmonically, of the soprano melody and its subsequent choral harmonisation, is Mendelssohn's 'He, watching over Israel' (with which it shares the same key and tempo) in terms of both detail and larger structure. Cast as a ternary form, the first section retains a simple homophonic texture with some notable tonally divergence to F major before cadencing in D. A secondary paragraph, initiated by the basses is more declamatory at first, but becomes increasingly contrapuntal as it moves first towards F# minor and more arrestingly to C major (see letter E) and more intensely to F minor (letter F).

The image shows a page of a musical score. At the top, it says 'Allegro Moderato e tranquillo. (♩ = 100)'. Below this, there are five staves for vocal parts: SOPRANO, ALTO, TENOR, BASS, and PIANO. The Soprano part has the lyrics 'There is joy in the presence of the'. The Piano part has a simple homophonic texture with a bass line marked 'p' and 'sempre'. The key signature is one sharp (F#). The time signature is common time (C). The score is for the opening of the chorus 'There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth' from The Prodigal Son.

Ex. 1: Opening of chorus 'There is joy in the presence of the angels', *The Prodigal Son*.

This section, furthermore, initiates the more reflective aspect of the oratorio in that it is drawn from Psalm 103, verse 13 ('Like as a father pitieth his own children') and



aria in two sections, the first in G minor with an accompaniment of nervous, double-bowed quavers. Here the next verse of Luke is projected ('Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me') in G minor which is subsequently juxtaposed with a more confident lyrical paragraph in the major, the text of which Sullivan drew from Ecclesiastes (3, vv. 12-13: 'For I know that there is no good but for a man to rejoice and also that every man should eat and drink, and enjoy the good of his labour'), probably having in mind the emptiness of vanity which is the focus of this book from the Old Testament. Here too, the already evident meaning of the son's action, to spend what has been earned, is obvious in Ecclesiastes' pessimism. A further juxtaposition of these two texts is heightened in the repeat of the 'binary' structure. This is effected initially by an impressive process of tonal obliquity (see top of p. 19) where the son's continued insistence is coloured by a shift towards C through the agency of a diminished seventh and a musical rhetoric of foreboding in the semiquaver figure. While this gesture subsides dynamically, Sullivan's *coup de maître* here is to move to the dominant of the Neapolitan for the soloist's next entry before deftly converting the Neapolitan to diminished harmony in G minor and a further reprise of the G major section.

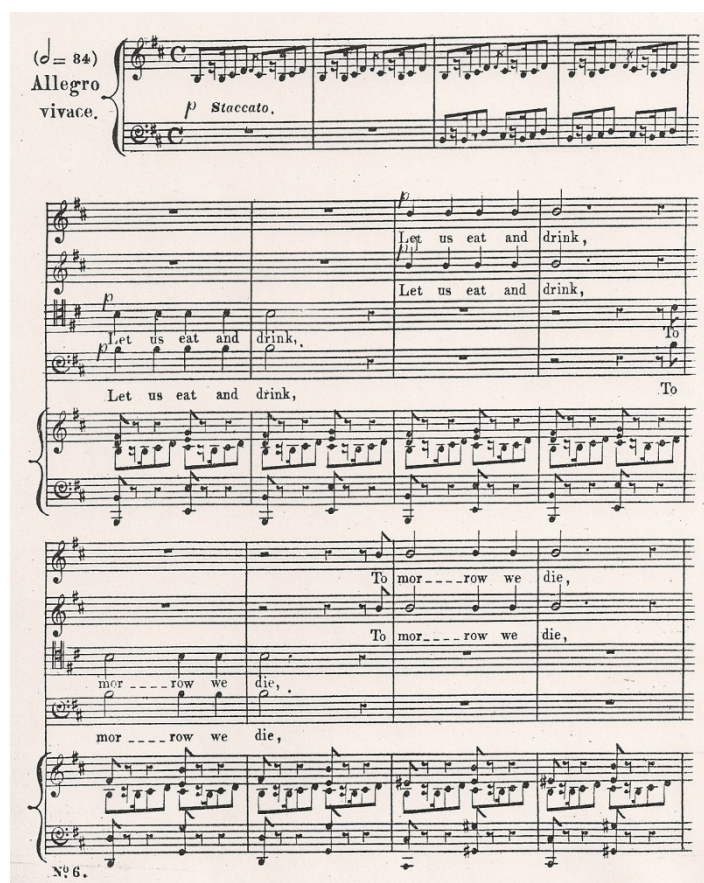
The foreboding minor coloration of the tenor aria ushers in a paragraph of two sections where B minor is strongly and urgently present. Somewhat astutely, Sullivan extracted the words he required as the father's response to his son's exhortation from the 'instructional' nature of the Book of Proverbs. This 'wisdom literature' was entirely appropriate as a didactic agency. The bass's recitative entry



'My son attend to my words' was taken from Chapter 4, verses 18 and 20 and is suspended above a pedal of B. Its resolution to B minor, however, is short-lived, for the father's message ('Honour the Lord with thy substance') is more benevolent in its melodic rhetoric and inclines towards D major, the tonality of the first chorus. Indeed, the father's affecting aria 'Trust in the Lord' (Proverbs 3, vv. 6 and 9), reminiscent of those similar moments of compassion and pathos of 'O rest in the Lord' from *Elijah*, affirms D major. Nevertheless, through Sullivan's deployment of the bipartite scheme he used in the previous 'Recit. and Aria' for the son, he is able to reiterate the urgency of B minor by concluding the first verse of the aria on V of B, thereby allowing a more pressing reiteration of the initial recitative in B minor. The aria's second verse subsequently begins in exactly the same manner as the first verse, and contains a telling modulation to B minor, but this time the consequent material is different and reaches a powerful climax by means of an extended dominant pedal and the bass's ascent to high F sharp ('For the path of the just is as a shining light').

For the narrative recitative, in which the solo soprano makes her first entrance, 'And the younger son gathered all together', the return of B minor underscores the resolve of the son to ignore his father and, using Luke's text, 'wasted his substance with riotous living'. The tonality was undoubtedly intended to encapsulate a sense of moral degeneration which is borne out in the succeeding chorus 'Let us eat and drink'. Styled as a Scherzo, it is built on a rhythmic ostinato established by the strings in the opening bars, clearly to set the mood of restlessness. Sullivan took his text - 'Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die' - from Isaiah

Chapter 22 v. 13 and Chapter 56 v. 12. Again this choice of Old Testament words was deftly chosen, not least because the Book of Isaiah was, and continues to be, considered as the 'Fifth Gospel' owing to its relevance and role in Christian theology and teaching.<sup>12</sup> The later chapters of the Book of Isaiah present a narrative of a man



Ex. 3: Chorus 'Let us eat and drink', *The Prodigal Son*.

who, through humiliation, is healed, redeemed and restored to God, thereby concurring most appositely with the message of Luke's Gospel. The structure of the chorus is a simple but direct A B A B A' form. 'A' constitutes a choral statement (with the chorus as turba) based on a syllabic monotone on the tonic pitch ('Let us eat and drink'), a gesture repeated and which reaches its conclusion with a climactic,

<sup>12</sup> See Sawyer, J. F. A., 'Isaiah' in Metzger, B. M. & Coogan, M. D. (eds.), *The Oxford Companion to the Bible* (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 1993), 328-9.

harmonised cadence, throwing into relief the nihilistic rejoinder 'For tomorrow we die'). As a contrast to this collective witness, the solo tenor ('Fetch wine and we will fill ourselves'), clearly the impersonation of the son by its association of tessitura, shifts to G major which cements a neat tonal connection with his earlier aria. The choral section is duly repeated, though embellished with more decorative filigree in the wind, and the soloist follows, though this time more urgently leading into an extended coda in which the cadential statements recall the end-of-act gestures of Rossini, Donizetti and particularly Verdi's early operas *I Lombardi* and *Attila*.

Having established a scene of suitable 'debauchery', Sullivan used his next composite vocal structure, 'Woe unto them that rise up early in the morning', as an important didactic foil, and for this he suitably introduced the panacea-like sonority of a solo contralto. Continuing to draw his text from the latter part of Isaiah, the message is one of turning to God for life's meaning rather than the ephemeral effects of drink, carnal desires and wild music. This is embodied in the recitative and arioso by a shift from G major (the tenor's tonal representation of defiance) to the dominant of E flat (the key of the pastoral introduction). More significantly, however, Sullivan attempts to represent more dramatically the process of *anagnorisis* in the son's behaviour, first by beginning the recitative in his associated key. A reminiscence of the previous chorus is introduced ('And the harp and the viol, the tabret and pipe are in their feasts') as if to remind us of the son's ill-chosen lifestyle before the chorus, once again as *turba*, intensify the sense of dissipation away from G chromatically to the dominant of E flat and symbolising, quite graphically, the son's

moral abandonment. At this point, Sullivan's answer, in E flat major, is marked 'Song' rather than 'Aria', as if perhaps to imply a more popular, melodious genre. Although the benevolent nature of its text shares much with similar paradigms in Mendelssohn (notably the air 'If with all your hearts ye truly seek Me' with which it also shares the same key), the piece's vocally-dominated nature (with an appreciable range) seems to imply that very genre of reflective song, so common in Sullivan's later Savoy operas<sup>13</sup> where comment on the action is provided. Yet, for all its vocal simplicity (particularly its conjunct motion), the ternary form reveals the composer's sophisticated tonal palette, the deftly-handled central section reaching as far as C flat major before recovering E flat by means of a dominant pedal.

Having instilled a sense of hope in this euphonious miniature, Sullivan returns to Luke's Gospel narrative ('And when he had spent all') and restores the dramatic atmosphere in a brief but turbulent orchestral episode in which he passes through three distantly related keys of C minor, E flat minor and F sharp minor before using F sharp minor dominant (enharmonically notated as D flat) as a pivotal Neapolitan to return to C minor (a vivid reminder of his ability to handle advanced tonality). The establishment of C as a tonality is also of some significance since the first part of this recitative, the tenor aria 'How many hired servants' and the chorus 'The sacrifices of God' act as a major dramatic and structural watershed within the oratorio. After the C minor statement of the recitative, the tonality moves back to the

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<sup>13</sup> Examples of this kind of reflective moment and comment on the action abound in works like *Haddon Hall* (1892), *The Beauty Stone* (1897) and *The Rose of Persia* (1899) which were all written for the Savoy Theatre stage. Moreover, fine examples like Rebecca's reflective aria 'Lord of our chosen race' may also be found in Sullivan's only grand opera *Ivanhoe* (1891).

son's original tonality of G major though the approach to this closely related key is somewhat tortured as the narrative tells of the son's suffering in the famine. The soprano's aria that follows ('O that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments') resumes the source of Isaiah Chapter 48 v. 18, this time using the text as a form of chastening entreaty, yet the trend of melodiousness inaugurated by the contralto song is here generously accentuated in a similar ternary design. The aria, however, is very much preludial to the entry of the son. Marked 'Solo' his vocal number is dramatically one of the main focal points of the oratorio and stands out from the larger structure as the only through-composed movement. This section of Luke's narrative represents the son at his lowest ebb as he questions his abject poverty and misery ('How many hired servants of my father's'). Sullivan's response is not one of lament and suffering, but one of hope as he sets the scene as a Gounod-esque pastoral in which much of the harmony and orchestration is prophetic of *Iolanthe* (Example 4). Here too the son's humble abjection is mirrored by the 'p' dynamic:



Ex. 4: Vocal opening of 'How many hired servants', *The Prodigal Son*.

The real impact of the scena, by dint of its simple thematic material, is the unexpected tonal divergence to the Neapolitan, D flat major (see p. 54), at the point of the son's *anagnorisis*, when he realises that his only hope is to return home to his

father. This tonal change has the effect of throwing into relief not only the son's epiphany but also the sense of *peripeteia* (change of fortune) and *pathos*. What is more the transformation of the penitent is given further accentuation by the elliptical return to C (by way of an augmented sixth which bypasses the usual dominant - see p. 55). The last part of the aria, firmly anchored to C major, captures the son's final act of repentance, the tenor's high, climactic Gs symbolising the appeal to his father.

Audiences, of course, would have been well aware of the story's outcome, but Sullivan's dramatic instincts at this stage are for the aria to end quietly, with an atmosphere of uncertainty. Would the son meet with an unfavourable response from his father and would he be cast in derision and disgrace? At the conclusion to the aria, Sullivan's own musical response is masterly, for instead of launching immediately into a dramatic dialogue, the narrative is held up by a transformed version of the first chorus ('There is joy in the presence of God') into a hushed, accompanied, through-composed motet in which the thematic material appears in the tenors (a tessitura probably chosen by Sullivan to complement that of the repentant son); as a secondary gesture, too, after the cadence at letter A (p. 59), Sullivan adroitly appends the well known verse from Psalm 51 and the most penitential of Psalms for Holy Week ('The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit') which audiences would have known from the Order of Evening Prayer in *The Book of Common Prayer*.

This chorus has the effect of rounding off this entire section of the oratorio in C major, for after this gesture of tranquil repentance, the drama once again breaks

loose with another through-composed movement ('And he arose and came to his father'), essential in this regard to readmit the narrative but also to capture the oratorio's most important moment of *anagnorisis* - the father's physical recognition of his son on the road. In a dramatic sense, the soprano's opening recitative (initiated from C major) begins like the tenor aria beforehand quietly as if to instill a sense of doubt as to what might happen next, but with the father's expression of overwhelming compassion the vocal rises to climax, a strategic move which ushers in the greater tension of the dominant key, G major. With the statement of this new key, the son makes his appeal with one thematic strand which is answered by another from the father (the words of which Sullivan adeptly drew from Genesis 45 v. 28 and 46 v. 30). These two elements combine in a duet which skillfully retains a sense of forward motion through its balance of recitative and arioso, and this momentum continues in the short recitative for the father ('Bring forth the best robe'), though with a much more dramatic tonal transition to B major for the father's aria.

Sullivan's choice of B major for this point in the narrative was almost certainly to refer back to the section in B minor - the morally 'lowest' part of the parable - but with the use of the major mode as a counterweight, the message of benevolence and power of forgiveness is powerfully accentuated. What is more, Sullivan clearly understood (and wished to convey) that the father's sense of compassion was ultimately *the most important* theological feature and the principal message of the oratorio. Moreover, it is evident from the most generous and extended aria structure

of the oratorio that he wished to articulate something of the *human* side of the father's love. The aria's 'Allegro vivace' is suggestive of the *élan* of Gounod (though without the vocal athletics) though this is combined with that simpler English melodiousness which looks forward to similar numbers in the Savoy operas, the energy lying instead in the lively orchestral accompaniment<sup>14</sup>. In need of text for his larger structure, Sullivan drew verses from Psalm 103 v. 13 ('Like as a father pitieth his own children, even so is the Lord merciful to them that fear him') and from Psalm 66 v. 20 ('Blessed be God who hath heard my prayer and not turned his mercy from me'). The first of these verses from the Psalms is used as a contrasting section which moves to the relative minor before shifting to the dominant of B once more. At this point a reprise of the opening is perhaps expected, but instead, the father's own gesture of penitence and gratitude is expressed by the second of the Psalm verses in a remarkable chorale-like passage emphasizing the aura of prayer. This is also potently evoked by a lyricism full of pathos as the tonality moves to D major encapsulating the sense of religious and musical genuflection. From this the music recovers to a dominant pedal of B in preparation for the reprise of the opening material and the recapitulation of the text from Luke, though Sullivan's final and most telling - indeed dramatically powerful - gesture is to return to this genuflective material in the aria's coda with its one-bar string arpeggio leading into a reprise of

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<sup>14</sup> An example of this in the operas is surely Elsie's recit and aria '*'Tis done, I am a bride'* from *The Yeomen of the Guard* (1888) in which the solo soprano sings a steady dotted crotchet melody in 6/8 whilst in the orchestra the strings play a large series of semiquaver flourishes and quaver arpeggio figures almost continually throughout the piece. The recit and song for Sadie '*Mine, mine at last'* from *The Beauty Stone* (1898) is another fine example of an aria in the Savoy canon in which the orchestra work almost independently of the singer.



the theme for three bars from the brass and being joined by the woodwind and in effect the whole orchestra for the concluding five bars, thus facilitating a very powerful and effective climax to the aria and underpinning the depth of emotion contained within it.

At this point in the oratorio, Sullivan found himself in a position where the narrative part of the oratorio had ceased (not unlike Mendelssohn in *Elijah* where, two thirds of the way through Part 2, the storyline also came to an end). In order to mitigate this, Sullivan resorted to a composite 'coda' made of solo and choral sections taken mainly from the Psalms and the book of Isaiah in order to reflect theologically on the parable. And to mark off this final section, the tonality moves notably flatwise. The first of the choruses (arguably the strongest of all the multi-sectional choruses in the work) takes its text from Psalm 107 vv. 4-6 and 8 ('O that men would praise the Lord for his goodness'). In three parts, it commences with a grand homophonic statement in A flat. This yields in turn to a dialogue section between altos and tenors ('They went astray in the wilderness') in F minor and a full; choral transition in F major ('Yet when they cried') to a full worked-out fugue - the most discursive and tonally exploratory in the work. This grand musical set piece provides a prelude to what is a didactic 'finale'. The tenor recitative and aria (which moves from F major to A flat), 'Come ye children', from Hebrews 12 vv. 11 and 6 and Psalm 34 vv. 6 and 11 echo the comforting message of Mendelssohn lyrical tenor aria 'If with all your heart ye truly seek me'. From A flat, Sullivan finally re-establishes the key of the oratorio's opening, E flat major, but does so subtly and unexpectedly

with the solo unaccompanied quartet - effectively a partsong - 'The Lord is nigh'. This beautifully handled structure (which resembles many of the abridged sonata structures of his teacher John Goss's short anthems) functions as a solemn prelude to the last chorus 'Thou O Lord art our Father' which shares the same metre and energy as 'Thanks be to God' from *Elijah*, though without Mendelssohn's thrilling tonal treatment.

From this analytical discussion, it is clear that Sullivan thought carefully about the nature of *The Prodigal Son*, and that his choice of texts outside that of Luke's Gospel were sensitively and strategically selected to enhance the theatrical bent of his setting. While the material is not consistently good, there is much to observe in the judicious handling of form and tonality in the work (see Table 1) and, given that Sullivan wanted to maintain a level of technical approachability in the choral writing, he was able to create an appealing and coherent work on a relatively small scale in which his dramatic instincts could find sufficient utterance within the clothing and style-form of the oratorio.

Section	Subtitle	Key	Comments
1	Introduction	E flat	Pastoral scene, moving more ominously to V of D
2	Chorus: 'There is joy in the presence of the angels'	D	
3	Recit. & Air: (Tenor) 'A certain man had two sons'	G minor	Bipartite form - G minor and G major
4	Recit. & Air: (Bass) 'My son, attend to my words'	D	Begins portentously in B minor
5	Recit.: (Tenor) 'And the younger son'	B minor	
6	Solo & Chorus: 'Let us eat and	B minor	ABABA form

	drink'		
7	Recit & Chorus: (Contralto) 'Woe unto them'	Transitional	Begins in G but shifts to V of E flat
8	Song (Contralto): 'Love not the world'	E flat	
9	Recit. (Soprano): 'And when he had spent all'	Transitional	Begins in C minor but moves to V of G
10	Aria (Soprano): 'O that thou hadst hearkened'	G	
11	Solo (Tenor): 'How many hired servants'	C	
12	Chorus: 'The sacrifices of God'	C	'Reprise' of 'There is joy in the presence of the angels'
13	Recit. (Soprano); Duet 'Tenor & Bass': 'And he arose and came to his father'	G	
14	Recit. & Aria (Bass): 'Bring forth the best robe'	B	Begins in G but moves to B major
15	Chorus: 'O that men would praise the Lord'	A flat/F	Bipartite structure with concluding fugue
16	Recit. & Aria (Tenor): 'Come ye children'	F/A flat	
17	Quartet: 'The Lord is nigh'	E flat	Unaccompanied quartet
18	Chorus: 'Thou O lord art our Father'	E flat	

Table 2: Musical and textual scheme of *The Prodigal Son*

Young pointed out that the work, 'betrays a lack of commitment - but there are a number of places where the music comes to life, often stimulated by fine details of orchestration'<sup>15</sup>. Sullivan can clearly be seen in this score to be at his most economical and his most effective in matters of orchestration, and as such, he was way ahead of his British contemporaries. Although many Victorian and Edwardian audiences continued to love and perform the work, it was by its very absence from Ernest Walker's *A History of Music in England*, given short shrift, and, after the First World

<sup>15</sup> Young, P., *Sir Arthur Sullivan* (Dent & Co.: London, 1971) 89.

War fell into neglect. Later criticism, though tempered, has been kinder. As Nigel Burton has stated (with some pertinence to his later theatrical forays):

He made a reasonable beginning with *The Prodigal Son*... one of the shortest mid-Victorian oratorios; its best number was the multi-sectional chorus 'O that men would therefore praise the Lord', in which he drew effectively on his knowledge of the verse anthems of Purcell and Handel to create an impressive series of related and heightening musical climaxes (an ability which was to stand him in good stead in the first-act finales of his comic operas). In general, though, he seems to have taken greater trouble over the construction of the libretto than over the music, in which, amongst other influences, the first traces of Gounod are evident.<sup>16</sup>

*The Prodigal Son* was undoubtedly what Sullivan's contemporaries would have expected from someone who had won the Mendelssohn scholarship and though it is not in itself up to the advanced work of his later years, it is more than just a curiosity or a forerunner to greater achievement. For one thing, it advanced Sullivan's reputation from being a composer who at twenty took Leipzig and London by storm with his *Tempest* music, to a recognized position in his mid-twenties as Victorian England's master musician. As Jacobs pointed out:

Sullivan had successfully launched his first oratorio - the word may be taken in its strictest sense - not merely a vague religious cantata, but a narrative work based directly on the Scriptures - vigorous musical strokes illustrate the sudden changes of the Prodigal's fate, and the composer's Chapel Royal training emerges in the solidly wrought choruses. That the slow marching soprano air 'O that thou hadst harkened' should bring a lapse into sub 'Elijah' is not surprising.<sup>17</sup>

That Sullivan found something to suit his particular musical chemistry in this biblical story is significant, since for his next foray into oratorio, a much more extended concept, he was to have greater difficulty.

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<sup>16</sup> Burton, N., 'Oratorios and Cantatas' in Temperley, N. (ed.), *The Blackwell History of Music in Britain: The Romantic Age 1800-1914* (Basil Blackwell Ltd: Oxford, 1988), 228.

<sup>17</sup> Jacobs, A., *Arthur Sullivan* (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 1984), 58.

Sullivan's second oratorio was, by comparison, a quite different conception. Commissioned by the Birmingham Festival, the composer had to contend with more of an epic genre, one that had to be conceived across an entire afternoon or evening, in two halves with an interval, and one that required a story and libretto on a much larger scale; and though it was not necessarily an obligation to draw the narrative from the Bible, it was more or less considered *de rigueur* to use stories from the Old Testament since they were universally familiar to the Protestant, bible-reading ethos of Birmingham audiences. This time, however, Sullivan opted to write an oratorio, not from the familiar catalogue of Old Testament epics; instead his work was more unconventionally based on material from the New Testament as well as select texts from the Old Testament (notably from the Psalms and the prophetic writings of Jeremiah and Isaiah) in which he would create his own libretto. These were chosen and advised upon by his colleague George Grove<sup>18</sup>. Ambitiously he decided to look to the life of Christ, a massive undertaking, and worthy of grand opera (as Wagner had formerly considered), but instead of having the theatre as a likely agency where solo singers could interact freely, the genre of oratorio naturally demanded large amounts of chorus (after all the *raison d'être* of a *choral* festival) which circumscribed the conception of the work (as Parry would find with his two Birmingham oratorios,

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<sup>18</sup> Grove was reported in a review (see footnote 45 on page 127) as having been involved, but no other evidence for this statement appears to exist. Saxe Wyndham mentions Grove's help with the text (see Saxe Wyndham, H. *Arthur Sullivan* (George Bell & Sons: London 1903) 42, but he may have just been taking this directly, and on face value, from the newspaper review, as most of this book merely seems to repeat points made in other sources. Significantly, there is no mention of Grove assisting in the oratorio in either Lawrence's book (Lawrence, A., *Sir Arthur Sullivan* (Bowden: London 1899) or in Herbert Sullivan's book (Sullivan, H., & Flower, N., *Sir Arthur Sullivan* (Cassell: London 1927).

*Judith* and *King Saul* and Elgar with his *The Apostles* and *The Kingdom*, (arguably *opéras-manquées*). As a composer with an instinct for dramaturgy, this was by no means a congenial task. In *The Prodigal Son*, the length of the work and the individual movements had allowed him to retain some sense of dramatic continuity and coherence, but a larger canvas, constantly 'held up' by reflective choral set pieces, was a new and unfamiliar challenge and would ultimately prove incompatible with his inherent intuitions.

The first performance of the oratorio was reviewed in *The Times* as part of its assessment of the Birmingham Festival. The first performance took place on 27 August and, as ever, the presence of royalty was the first thing to which the critic drew attention:

The Duke of Edinburgh returned to Ingate today after the performance of Mr Arthur Sullivan's oratorio at which he was present from first to last.<sup>19</sup> The impression of this short visit made by His Royal Highness has been most favourable. Wherever he was seen he was cheered with real enthusiasm - precisely at half-past eleven, the hour announced for the beginning, the Duke of Edinburgh, the Earl of Shrewsbury and Talbot and their friends arrived. Then there was another burst of cheering, to echo the cheers still heard outside the building. The hall was filled in every part and as had been the case the day before when *Elijah* was given, standing room could not be obtained for love or money after the oratorio had begun.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> The work was dedicated to the Duchess of Edinburgh (Grand Duchess Maria Alexandrovna of Russia). The manuscript score was bequeathed in Sullivan's will to Alfred, Duke of Edinburgh. A letter from Laura Hobbs, the archivist at the Royal Archives (dated 8<sup>th</sup> May 2015) informed the present writer that as the Duke predeceased Sullivan by five months dying in Coburg in July 1900, it would be extremely unlikely that the manuscript score ever entered the Royal Collection. In Herbert Sullivan's biography of his uncle, he confirms that the score was left in Sullivan's will, dated 4<sup>th</sup> March 1899, to the Duke of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha, but in a footnote he points out that at the time of writing (1927) the score was 'now the property of H.R.H. the Princess Louise' who was an intimate friend of the composer (see chapter two, page 29). The autograph manuscript score is now in the Bodleian library in Oxford, having been transferred from the Oxford University Faculty of Music library, but how it came to be in the possession of the University remains a mystery.

<sup>20</sup> *The Times*, 28 August 1873.

Sullivan had his share of cheering too, because as the reporter pointed out 'today is a proud day for Mr Sullivan, who, to judge by the hearty and unanimous greeting that welcomed his appearance on the platform, is a great favourite in this town, where other works from his pen have obtained well merited success'.<sup>21</sup> The reference to 'other works' was no doubt a reference to *Kenilworth* which had been performed seven years before. The critic evidently thought the new piece undoubtedly superior, reporting that 'the last outgrowth of his genius...leaves far behind all that has preceded it. To compose an oratorio is, under any circumstances, a heavy, laborious and responsible task, but to be able to compose a good oratorio is within the power of a very small minority. Mr Sullivan has not only composed a good oratorio, but in many respects a great one. That *The Light of the World* is destined to live we feel convinced'.<sup>22</sup>

The fact is, of course, that the oratorio did no such thing as the years passed. Not long after the Birmingham performance, the work was given by the Brixton Choral Society in London and they subsequently performed it at least a second time. The London premiere took place with the Royal Albert Hall Choral Society under Sullivan's direction on 19 March 1874 in the presence of the Duke and Duchess of Edinburgh and other members of the Royal family where it received a similar level of approbation as at Birmingham. A third major performance took place at Liverpool, again under Sullivan's baton in October 1874. Yet, after this brief flurry of

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

hearings, the limited number of performances that were undertaken caused the oratorio's lack of presence in concert programmes and the work became conspicuous by its very absence. In truth, Sullivan's work, composed on an especially large scale, was too long for most choral societies and, for that matter, audiences, a point surely confirmed by the appearance of 'selections' from the oratorio which the composer conducted at the Worcester Three Choirs Festival in September 1879<sup>23</sup>. After that the work virtually disappeared from the repertoire and was remembered only by way of odd extracts in the form of solo arias.

The Birmingham Festival had had many notable successes with the oratorios written for performance at it, from Mendelssohn's *Elijah* (1846) to Sir Julius Benedict's *St Peter* (1870) not to mention works now less well known such as *Eli* and *Naaman* by Sir Michael Costa which were performed in 1855 and 1864 respectively. Moreover, when *The Light of the World* appeared on the scene, not only did it have to compete with the staple 'classics' of Mendelssohn and Handel, but also other contemporary works of a more concise and practical length, such as Macfarren's *St John the Baptist* which were enjoying a vogue among English audiences at the time. In truth Sullivan had selected a very difficult theme for musical treatment and one which Handel had already dealt with in *Messiah* and which Mendelssohn had touched on in the fragments of his oratorio *Christus*. Nevertheless, the work as Sullivan wrote it, bore no resemblance to either of these. Perhaps truer to dramatic instincts he chose to organise his oratorio in a set of 'scenes' from the life of Christ

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<sup>23</sup> It appears that Sullivan had plans to shorten the oratorio, but never did. (See footnote 40 below).



rather than simply create a narrative similar to that of one of the Gospels. Such a division suggests a more operative approach. In justifying this plan, Sullivan made his intentions clear in the preface to his score:

In this oratorio the intention has not been to convey the spiritual idea of the Saviour, as in the Messiah or to record the sufferings of Christ as in the Passions of Bach, but to set forth the human aspect of the life of our Lord on earth, exemplify it by some of the actual incidents in His career, which bear specially upon His attributes of Preacher, Healer and Prophet. For this purpose and to give it dramatic force, the work has been laid out in 'scenes' dealing respectively in the first part with the 'nativity', 'preaching', 'healing' and 'prophesying' of our Lord, ending with the triumphant entry into Jerusalem; and in the second part with the utterances which, containing the declaration of Himself as the Son of Man, excited to the utmost the wrath of his enemies and led the rulers to conspire for his betrayal and death, the solemn recital of the chorus of His sufferings and belief in His final reward, the grief of Mary Magdalene at the sepulchre, and the consolation and triumph of the disciples at the resurrection of their Lord and Master.<sup>24</sup>

### **Bethlehem (Part 1)**

Rather than begin with an orchestral prelude, Sullivan chose to open his oratorio with a 'Prologue Chorus' in which the selected words from Isaiah Chapter 11 (vv. 1, 3 and 4), Chapter 61 (vv. 1) which Luke later paraphrased in his gospel Chapter 4, (v. 18) and Chapter 25 (v. 8) encapsulate God's prophesy of the coming of the Messiah. These words, commonly read as the Christmas Old Testament lesson,<sup>25</sup> would have been exceptionally well known to its hearers and sets a trend in Sullivan's adroit choice of text throughout the oratorio. Even from the outset, the composer was aware of his audience's taste and mentality and sought to shape his oratorio as a vehicle for popular scripture. Though gently pastoral in demeanour, the prologue

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<sup>24</sup> Sullivan, A., *The Light of the World* (Cramer: London, 1873), preface to vocal score.

<sup>25</sup> These words remain etched into today's Anglican culture as words read during the Nine Lessons and Carols established by Eric Milner-White at King's College, Cambridge.

nevertheless possesses a singularly theatrical tone with its flatwise shift towards the tonic minor (E flat minor) and is redolent of Gounod (who, through his recent domicile in London, having fled Paris after the Prussian occupation of the city, was extremely popular in musical circles), particularly through its anguished appoggiaturas and poignant dominant minor ninth at the half close. The chorus itself is a relatively simple ternary structure, built around the opening lyrical line for tenors and basses ('There shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse'). Intended to be a majestic statement, the melody adopts a robust configuration which, despite its delivery by unison tenors and basses, might well have suited a solo singer. Its local tonal behaviour closely reflects the flatwise tendency of the opening orchestral bars, going even further towards C flat major before recovering to E flat major at the melody's climax (four bars before letter C). This yields to a central section initiated by the sopranos ('Because the Lord hath anointed him to preach good tidings'), again melodically dominated by individual parts of the choir. At the climax of this section, Sullivan takes us to the dominant of C (see letter D) before subtly ushering in the truncated restatement of the opening melody this time harmonised initially in C minor rather than E flat major, a deft touch made more subtle by the use of the soprano's material as a descant. And in the closing section, his use of unaccompanied chorus as a foil to the full sound of chorus and orchestra provides a colourful, not to say devotional gesture to the last line of text ('He will swallow up death in victory') in which the operative word, 'death', is furnished with individual and original dissonance.



Example 6: Opening of the Pastoral Prelude to 'Bethlehem', *The Light of the World*.

The Prologue functions as a choral prelude to four larger sections which constitute Part 1 of the oratorio. The first of these sections, entitled 'Bethlehem', treats the nativity texts with some freedom. At its head lies the story of the shepherds as recounted in Luke, using a pastoral orchestral intermezzo and two highly popular texts, 'There were shepherds abiding in the fields' as a recitative and the *turba*-style chorus 'Glory to God in the Highest'. The 'Intermezzo' (as 'Piva') and both texts would have been well known through Handel's deployment of them in *Messiah* over a century before.<sup>26</sup> To some indeed, the parallel with Handel's work, as Henry Lunn commented in the *Musical Times*, was 'too great to be resisted'.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>26</sup> Whether Sullivan knew Bach's *Christmas Oratorio* by 1873 is less certain, although this work also evinces a pastoral and use of the same texts.

<sup>27</sup> Lunn, H., 'The Birmingham and Hereford Musical Festivals', *Musical Times*, xvi (October, 1873), 236.



Example 7: Opening of recitative 'There were shepherds abiding in the field'.

The pastoral movement is in fact a sonata structure which, though lacking the 'drama' of a traditional overture (such as Mendelssohn's *Hebrides* or *Ruy Blas*), acts essentially as the oratorio's 'official' preludial material. Here again Sullivan brings an unconventional touch to the opening of his work in that the traditional overture is structurally displaced. What is more, it has a curious 'Janus-like' character in that, although it retains all those traditional characteristics of the Christmas nativity pastorales - pedal points (or musette-like drones), the compound time signature (here 9/8) and the dotted figurations, all aromatic of the eighteenth-century Baroque practice, the nineteenth-century ambience of Sullivan's harmony and gesture looks forward to many of the composer's secular effusions in that style in his operettas.

The first 'mise en scène' of Sullivan's New Testament episodes is 'Bethlehem' which summarises the method which he chose to structure all his biblical 'episodes' throughout the oratorio. The section is constructed in order to represent, at least

according to the composer, those essential elements of the nativity, with, at the same time, a view to internal brevity and conciseness (since the inclusion of all the familiar nativity material would have outweighed the balance of the larger work's design). Sullivan's personal choice, which sacrificed elements of biblical chronology, began, as noted above with the 'Pastoral Overture' as a representation of the nativity scene (drawing on eighteenth-century precedents). Recitative, arioso and *turba* chorus portray the angels' appearance to the shepherds and the latter's decision to visit Bethlehem (a set of musical events already familiar from *Messiah*).<sup>28</sup> A central recitative and aria – and this is a potential weakness of the plan – takes text from the Annunciation in which Mary responds to the Angel Gabriel's words with the opening three verses from the 'Magnificat'. A pastoral chorus follows as the shepherds articulate their reaction to Christ's birth ('The whole earth is at rest'). While this part of the larger 'scene' is framed in C major, the second part returns to E flat, linking it closely with the opening Prologue. In this part Sullivan clearly attempted to provide a more dramatic and sinister contrast. This is signalled in the solo recitative for alto ('Arise and take the young child' – Joseph's dream) which initiates the 'Flight into Egypt', appropriately beginning in C minor. A chorus in A flat minor is an elegy to the Holy Innocents which is partnered by a rallying air for tenor ('Refrain thy voice from weeping') in the tonic major, while the entire 'scene' is concluded by a recitative for alto (reiterating the exhortation to flee Judea) and a

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<sup>28</sup> The *turba* chorus for tenors and basses, 'Let us now go even unto Bethlehem', was also used by Bach in the *Christmas Oratorio*.

'chorale' chorus in E flat ('I will pour my spirit upon thy seed') which matches the Prologue in terms of substance and length.

PROLOGUE: 'There shall come forth a rod'	Isaiah	E flat	3/4	Orchestral Prelude and Chorus
BETHLEHEM				
Intro. and Recit.: 'There were shepherds'	Luke 2.8	C	9/8	Pastoral Overture, Tenor and Alto
Chorus of Angels: 'Glory to God'	Luke 2.14	G	4/4	Female Chorus
Chorus of Shepherds: 'Let us now go'	Luke 2.15	C	4/4	Male Chorus
Recit.: 'Blessed art thou among women'	Luke 1.42	C	4/4	Bass (Gabriel)
Air: 'My soul doth magnify the Lord'	Luke 1.46	G	3/4	Soprano (Mary)
Chorus of Shepherds: 'The whole earth is at rest'	Isaiah 14.7	C	12/8	Male Chorus
Recit.: 'Arise and take the young child'	Matthew 2.20	C to E flat	4/4	Alto
Chorus: 'In Rama was there a voice heard'	Matthew 2.18	A flat	4/4	Chorus
Air: 'Refrain thy voice from weeping'	Jeremiah 13.16	A flat	3/4	Tenor
Recit.: 'Arise and take the young child'	Matthew 2.20	E flat	4/4	Alto
Chorus: 'I will pour my spirit'	Isaiah 44.3	E flat	6/8	Chorus

Table 3: Tonal plan of 'Bethlehem' from *The Light of the World*

Consistent with his initial claim for *The Light of the World*, Sullivan's approach to the scene of the Incarnation is driven essentially by his instinct from *human* drama rather than simple narration by an 'Evangelist'. Clearly the narrative is always important and present in the forward motion of the material, but even here the role of 'Narrator' or 'Evangelist' is shared between the different tessituras of the soloists,

lending a varied human sensibility to the dramatic content, and wherever possible those biblical lines spoken by characters are assigned as closely to character types as possible. This is true of the angel (a contralto) whose recitative has an urgency and an element of menace in its initial E minor (letter K - see Example 7):



Example 8: Tenor (Evangelist) and Contralto (Angel) recitatives.

It is also evident in the exchange of *turba* choruses between the 'Chorus of Angels' for female voices and the Chorus of Shepherds for male voices. In the former chorus Sullivan no doubt took a lesson from Handel's *Messiah* with the 'arc-like' appearance of the angels as they passed across the heavens, mimicking the approaching sound of 'pp', the climax 'overhead' of 'ff' and the passing away to 'pp', and with the 'hubbub' and elation of the shepherds, he deployed a more polyphonic texture to create a sense of conversational interaction. Similarly too, their own 'conversation'



begins 'pp', rises to a climax of exhilaration before diminishing to one of 'pp' as the shepherds effectively make their 'exit'. Mary's exclamation of the 'Magnificat', which is ushered in by a shepherd, locates her in the stable (rather than some time before).



Example 9: Mary's aria 'My soul doth magnify the Lord' [Magnificat].

Her aria is thrown into relief by the placing of it in the dominant (G major) within the larger environment of C major. The restriction of the text to three verses was a wise decision, not only for matters of length, but also because it focuses entirely on the sense of mystified joy experienced by the Virgin at this point, though, of course dramatically, the elision of different biblical events - the Incarnation' and 'Anunciation' - makes for some confusion. The Virgin's air sets a significant precedent for the rest of the oratorio in that it, like most of the solo structures, is essentially simple in its ternary design, moderate in length, concise in its meaning, yet not without an injection of tonal artifice typical of Sullivan's sophisticated armoury; moreover, its orchestral tremolando, pregnant with excitement, reflects the



composer's theatrical impulse<sup>29</sup>. This is evident from the central paragraph after letter C where a potentially straightforward Phrygian move to V of E (8 after letter C) provokes a more unexpected divergence to B major itself, and if this shift to the mediant major is surprising enough (and no doubt representative of the Virgin's euphoria), Sullivan's recovery to G major is effected by a further unanticipated move through the Neapolitan (G# minor) and the flat submediant, E flat major (before letter D), which gives rise to a more oblique return of the tonic on a climactic 6/4. To bring the subsection of the nativity scene itself to a close, Sullivan aptly returned to the theme of the pastoral, though this time using a text from Isaiah rather than the Gospel of Luke. However, the text is given to the shepherds as a *turba* chorus and forms a rather longer statement. The structure - again more dramatic in nature - is based on two features: the quieter pastoral evocation ('The whole earth is at rest'), replete with its unusual shift to the flat seventh in bar 5 and which forms a frame to the chorus, and a second statement (like its early counterpart) more polyphonic in character and which, besides its greater rhythmical energy, reaches a pinnacle of 'ff' before subsiding back to the hushed pastoral mood of the opening.

In the second half of 'Bethlehem', Sullivan clearly attempted to provide a dramatic foil to the elation of the first. The subject matter of the slaughter of the innocents and the flight to Egypt self-evidently furnished a major contrast, and the shift, more broadly, to E flat underpinned this change of direction. In addition, much

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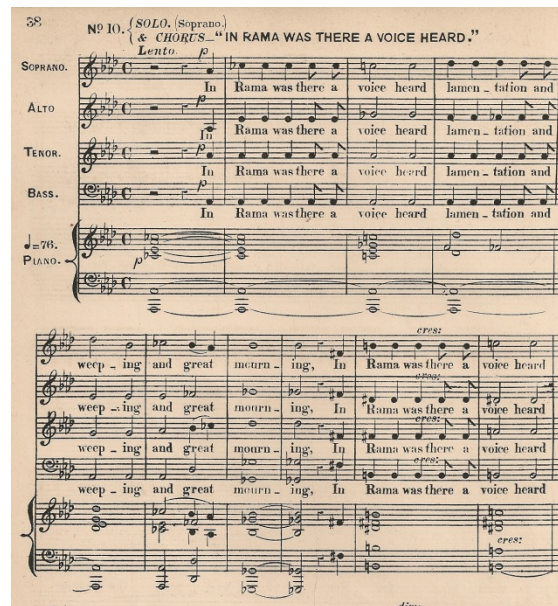
<sup>29</sup> Solo structures of this nature abound in the Savoy Operas and are particularly evident in the grand opera *Ivanhoe*.

of the content centres on the subject of lament. This is impressively recounted in 'In Rama was there a voice heard' (where Sullivan shifted to the Gospel of Matthew) which is couched in the rarified tonal area of A flat minor. Concomitant with the choice of this distant tonality (from the broader canvas of C major) is one of the composer's most adventurous harmonic canvases:

Bars	Text	Tonality
1-6	Chorus: 'In Rama was there a voice heard'	A flat -
7-15	Chorus: 'In Rama etc'	B +
16-20	'Rachel weeping for her children' with solo soprano ('Woe is me')	B +
21-25	Solo Soprano: 'Woe is me'	V of E flat
25-28	Chorus: 'In Rama was there a voice heard'	E flat -
29-32	Solo soprano: 'Woe is me' and Chorus: 'Rachel weeping for her children'	V of A -
33-34	Chorus: 'Rachel weeping for her children'	V of D
35-36	Chorus: 'Rachel weeping for her children'	V of C
37-45	Chorus: 'Rachel weeping for her children' with solo soprano ('Woe is me')	Enharmonic shift to V of A flat -
46-54	Chorus: 'Rachel weeping for her children' with solo soprano ('Woe is me')	A flat -

Table 4: Tonal plan of 'In Rama was there a voice heard'

An examination of the tonal progress of this through-composed chorus reveals an



Example 10: Opening of Chorus 'In Rama was there a voice heard'.

ambitious scheme shared between the narrating chorus and Rachel's voice of lament (played by the solo soprano) in which the composer makes use of some arresting enharmonic progressions. The first of these is the shift from A flat minor to B major (enharmonically C flat) in bar 9. Sullivan's recovery from this move to the flat mediant is achieved by a bass shift downwards of a semitone to V of E flat minor (A flat's dominant, though this close relationship is blurred by the unconventional approach) together with a further enharmonic shift in bars 21-22. This semitonal move then establishes a precedent for the 'bewailing' tone of the chorus's development which not only features a matrix of ascending and descending chromatic lines from both the chorus and soloist, but also a sequence of descending semitones in the bass through the dominants of A, D and C, complemented by the dissonant minor ninths of the chorus. Using pitches from the dominant of C as an enharmonic fulcrum (notably the notes of B and A flat as part of the dominant V<sup>9</sup>), V of A flat is restored (using A flat and C flat) at bar 41.

The tenor air that follows (using a text from Jeremiah), a typically ternary design, is a lyrical utterance dominated by the tenor's quasi-operatic melody. Perhaps most effective here is the manner in which the recapitulation of the main melody is accomplished on a climactic dominant ninth (three after letter H) after a tonally fluid central section. In restoring E flat at the end of this first major part of the oratorio, Sullivan gives us a chorus ('I will pour my spirit') more reminiscent of Mendelssohn in its combination of lively orchestral accompaniment, chorale and fugue ('He shall stand and feed in the strength of the Lord'), though in this instance Sullivan's tonal plan and interplay between these two baroque idioms is worthy of note in the way the initial chorale enters into a dialogue with recurrences of the fugue in remote keys (see Table 5), before the two are finally combined to mark the return of the tonic (E flat major):

Bar	Idiom	Key
1-22	Chorale: 'I will pour my spirit'	E flat +
25-48	Fugue: 'He shall stand and feed'	E flat + to B flat +
49-56	Chorale	B flat + to A -
57-72	Fugue	F + to A flat +
74-83	Chorale	A flat +
83-103	Fugue	C -/C +
104-111	Chorale: 'For he shall be great unto the ends of the earth'	B +
112-119	Chorale	B + to G +
121-114	Chorale	G + to V of V of E flat
115-125	Chorale and Fugue combined	V of E flat
126-141	Chorale	E flat +

Table 5: Scheme of Chorus 'I will pour my spirit'.

## Nazareth - In the Synagogue (Part 1)

The next scene transports the listener to Nazareth. Much has happened in the interim. Jesus has been baptised by John the Baptist who, having baptised many, was arrested and imprisoned by Herod. After temptation by the Devil in the wilderness, Christ, about whom much had been heard, returned to his home in Galilee where he taught in the synagogues. On coming to Nazareth, his home town, he visited the synagogue where, after reading from Isaiah, he presented himself to the congregation as the object of the Messianic prophesy. When they expressed their amazement he reproached them for their unbelief and they drove him out of the synagogue. It was from this episode in Chapter 4 of Luke's Gospel that Sullivan initiated his second scene, 'Nazareth - In the Synagogue'. Here, because of the presence and reaction of the congregation, there was much opportunity for chorus material. Indeed, Sullivan seems to have conceived this section as one more like the pages of a Passion rather than as a typical oratorio. This approach is conspicuous in the 'dialogue' between the voice Jesus (here portrayed by the solo baritone) and the *turba* choruses that follow each of Christ's statements (see Table 4 below). Each of the latter are presented serenely with slow-paced harmonic progressions,<sup>30</sup> while the choral responses from the congregation are more agitated and either fugal or imitative in texture. Sullivan's tonal scheme also reveals some adroitness here.

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<sup>30</sup> It is perhaps significant that Sullivan's choice of opening text, 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon you' is the very one that Elgar chose to open his oratorio *The Apostles*, performed at Birmingham in 1903.

Christ's first two utterances are presented in G major which are contrasted first by the chorus 'Whence hath this man this wisdom?' in the tonic minor and secondly in A minor. This change of key to the supertonic minor has the effect of intensifying the growing sense of collective outrage and blasphemy which is further accentuated by the unexpected and highly quizzical divergence to the dominant of F# minor at the close. At this point, Jesus' rebukes to the congregation become more insistent and more tonally dissolute only for the chorus to become more indignant in their responses ('Why hear ye him?' and 'Away with him'), all of which have a distinct parallel with the repartee of the Bachian passions.<sup>31</sup>

NAZARETH – IN THE SYNAGOGUE				
Recit. and Chorus 'The Spirit of the Lord'	Luke 4.18	G	3/4	Baritone (Jesus) and Chorus
Chorus (fugue): 'Whence hath this man this wisdom'	Matthew 13.54	G	4/4	Chorus
Recit. 'You will surely say unto me this proverb'	Luke 4.23	G	4/4	Solo
Chorus: 'Is not this Jesus the son of Joseph?'	John 6.42	A	4/4	Chorus

<sup>31</sup> There is another parallel with Bach in Sullivan's choice of orchestration when dealing with the words of Jesus. Bach accompanies Jesus in the Passions by employing low strings, and whilst most of the score of *The Light of the World* is orchestrated in a similar fashion to that of *The Prodigal Son*, Sullivan sets the words of Jesus using his own sound world (whilst at the same time giving a passing nod to Bach's economy and low instrumentation) by employing a small instrumental group consisting of Cor Anglais, Bassoon, Contra Bassoon, Viola, Cello, Clarinet and Bass Clarinet. Only in the solo 'Daughters of Jerusalem' does Sullivan introduce the Double Basses thereby giving added weight to the bass line, whilst the violins add an ascending phrase for Jesus when he sings 'then look up and lift up your hands'. Moreover, Sullivan's use of a small instrumental group has a surprisingly modern effect which foreshadows Britten's use of chamber orchestra to accompany the words of the two soldiers in the *War Requiem* (1962) almost a century later. Sullivan uses the small orchestral group to suggest a more intimate situation and seems to surround the words of Jesus with more of a mystical aura than would have been the case using the larger forces found elsewhere in the score. He certainly differentiates the music of Jesus from that of the other characters. This treatment seems also to have been adopted by Elgar in *The Apostles* (1902) because in his setting of 'By the wayside' he appears to have paid homage to Sullivan's writing by also having the violins accompany the words of Jesus.

Recit. and Chorus: 'I will tell you of a truth'	Luke 4.25	F#	4/4	Baritone
Chorus: 'Why hear ye him?'	John 10.20	F#	4/4	Chorus
Recit. and Chorus: 'And many lepers'	Luke 4.27	B to G	3/4	Baritone
Chorus: 'Away with him!'	John 10.20 and Luke 4.29	B	4/4	Chorus
Recit: 'Lord who hath believed our report'	Isaiah 53.1	G	4/4	Baritone
Quintet: 'Doubtless thou art our Father'	Isaiah 63.16	G	4/4	Solo Quintet ('Chorale')
Arioso: 'Blessed are they'	Matthew 5.10	D	4/4	Baritone
Chorus: 'He maketh the sun to rise'	Matthew 5.45	D	4/4	Chorus

Table 6: Plan of 'Nazareth - In the Synagogue'.

This 'Passion' sequence is concluded by a remarkable chorus in B minor which encapsulates the anger of the attendant not only through the use of the mediant minor but also by the greater rhythmical activity and heightened tempo ('Piú vivo'). Moreover, in leaving the choral rejoinder open-ended on V<sup>9</sup> (p. 80) of B, Sullivan skilfully left the action 'open' at a peak of tension which allows an extensive coda for Christ alone to pronounce further prophetic words from Isaiah ('Lord who hath believed our report') in the same serene manner as began the sequence. In re-establishing G major at the conclusion, Sullivan's final gesture is a quintet ('Doubtless thou art our Father') which in one sense adopts the guise of a closing chorale (again, reiterating the overshadowing presence of the Passion model), but there is also something of Mendelssohn's *Elijah* here too in the intimation of spiritual reassurance which is similarly conveyed in the double quartet which shares the same key. Structurally, too, both choruses share a ternary design, although Sullivan's

central section more typically explores the flat mediant (B flat major).

On reflection, Sullivan might have been better advised to have excised the last two parts of this section in order to preserve greater conciseness, although no doubt he was keen to include something from Jesus's 'Beatitudes' (as in 'Blessed are they'). However, the last chorus (deftly anticipated in the previous recitative), for all its lyrical qualities, succinct ternary structure (which has parallels with Mendelssohn's 'He, watching over Israel', again in the same key of D major), and beautifully executed reprise (see p. 99), seems superfluous to both musical and dramatic proceedings.

### **Lazarus (Part 1)**

In the next scene, Christ expresses his determination to attend the sick Lazarus. A disciple tries to dissuade him from returning to a place where he has just escaped further persecution, but undeterred by this, Christ persists and the disciples, after receiving news that Lazarus is dead, accompany him. This scene, told only in the Gospel of John (John 11:1-44), offered Sullivan the opportunity for the drama of one of Jesus' miracles not so far depicted in the oratorio.

Across this section Sullivan mapped a tonal plan in distinct contrast to the previous one centred on G and D. Here, embarking from F minor, the tonalities turn noticeably flatter, as the sorrow of human death and of resurrection are depicted (see Table 7).



LAZARUS				
Duet: 'Lord behold'	John 11.3	F	3/4	Baritone and Tenor
Orchestral Intermezzo: 'In Bethany'		D flat	4/4	Orchestra
Arioso and Chorus: 'Weep not ye for the dead'	Jeremiah 22.10 and 31.13	D flat	4/4	(connected with orchestral intermezzo)
Scena: 'Lord if thou had'st been here'	John 11.21	B flat to C#	4/4	Soprano (Martha) and Baritone
Chorus: 'Behold how he loved him'	John 11.36	F sharp	3/4	Chorus
Recit: 'Said I not unto thee'	John 11.40	G flat – V of A flat	4/4	Baritone
Chorus: 'The grave cannot praise thee'	Isaiah 38.18	A flat	2/2	Chorus

Table 7: Scheme for 'Lazarus'

The opening duet for 'a disciple' (tenor) and Jesus (baritone) recounts (with some textual expurgation) the beginning of the story of Lazarus in the form of a through-composed dialogue in which the tonality shifts from F minor to the dominant of D flat. Contrast between the two characters is also achieved through the disciple's restless questioning which is answered by Jesus's unruffled and increasingly self-possessed replies - in particular his last and most arresting ('Lazarus is dead') which, besides its cryptic impact, is thrown into relief by the sudden third-related shift from D flat to A (at letter D).

There follows a series of movements based around D flat portraying the tragedy of Lazarus's death. The first is a short orchestral transition, in an archaic style, which was presumably intended to represent Jesus' journey to Bethany. It also functions as prelude material for the 'Intermezzo' to which Sullivan gave the title

'In Bethany'. This forms part of an impressive tripartite scheme of which the orchestral Intermezzo forms the most substantial part. Here Sullivan's more contemporary romantic credentials are on display, not just with the exposition of the long, robust melody (6 bars after letter E), but also with striking sequence of progressions from the dominant of D (with a 6/4 that Liszt would have been proud of) back to the dominant of D flat marked by a powerful climax. From this 'seed bed' of material, Sullivan derived his model of solo melody and modified reprise in which the latter incorporates the same orchestral climax and coda.

From the pathos of D flat major, Sullivan gives us a second passage of dialogue, this time between Martha (soprano) and Jesus (baritone) which he marked 'Scena'. Like the earlier duet, this is also through-composed but is more remarkably chromatic in its content. Martha begins her lament in B flat minor, but with Jesus' interjection (p. 115), the tonality moves more starkly to A minor, paving the way for Martha's declaration of faith in C. Jesus' significant second interjection ('I am the resurrection and the life') accompanies a further arresting shift to A flat, a move which leads to the solemn conclusion in C# minor as Jesus prepares to call Lazarus back from the dead. This event is represented by a further *turba* chorus ('Behold how he loved him') in F# minor, a concise, stately minuet which functions both as a conclusion to the elegiac scena and as a conduit to the dramatic arioso for baritone. Likewise this arioso, replete with operatic tremolando, for Jesus ('Said I not unto thee') which commences in G flat major, sets up the extended final chorus in A flat ('The grave cannot praise'), effectively an 'Et resurrexit' chorus (analogous to the

Credo of the Mass) in which the chorus changes role to provide a concluding theological commentary using further prophetic words from Isaiah 38.18. In this ambitious set piece, Sullivan clearly set out to impress with all his technical *savoir-faire*, using various pairs of canonic mechanisms for his central paragraph between (a) bass and alto and (b) tenor and soprano (from letter V to letter X). This is succeeded by a fertile episode of imitative contrapuntal entries whose intricacy is eventually supported by an elongated dominant pedal (perhaps only Parry's in *Blest Pair of Sirens* is longer). Resolution of the pedal point ushers in the reprise of the opening choral exclamation, which is this time enhanced by reference to the contrapuntal episode and its epic pedal point.

### **The Way to Jerusalem (Part 1)**

The climactic nature of this elaborate chorus might have been sufficient to end the first half of the oratorio - and it is clear that Sullivan did not stint in bringing his considerable technique to bear on the music's involuted fabric - but he obviously concluded that he required a further preparatory scene to make sense of Christ's Passion in Part 2. Still he risked an imbalance of length in Part 1, which was already overlong. Indeed, it becomes evident at this stage of the oratorio that Sullivan had already experienced the dilemma of choosing such epic and universally well-known subject matter, for there would always be detractors ready to pounce on omitted episodes from the gospels which they thought critical to any dramatic portrayal.

What Sullivan ultimately chose to do was to make reference to former Old-Testament prophecies (most commonly quoted by Matthew) in a bid to locate Jesus in Jerusalem for Part 2. Warned by his disciples that the chief priests and the scribes, who were alarmed at the numbers of followers of Jesus, were resolved to kill him, Christ pronounces his intention of going to Jerusalem, indicating his foreknowledge of the fate that awaits him by saying that no prophet could come out of Jerusalem. Men, women and children now all welcome him as king and the Son of David - and after prophesying and lamenting the fate of the city, Christ enters amid the hosanna's of the crowd (see Table 8).

Recit. and Arioso: 'Master, get thee out'	Luke 13.31, 18.31 and 20.20	C	3/4	Tenor and Baritone
Chorus of Children: 'Hosanna to the Son of David'	Psalms 118.26 and Matthew 23.39	C	4/4	Female Chorus
Air: 'Tell ye the daughter of Sion' + coda for 'A Pharisee'	Matthew 21.5	F	6/8	Soprano
Chorus of Disciples: 'Blessed be the kingdom'	Mark 11.10	E flat	3/4	Chorus
Arioso (Jesus): 'If thou hadst known, O Jerusalem'	Luke 19.42	E flat to V of C	4/4	Baritone
Chorus: 'Hosanna to the Son'	Matthew 21.9	C	4/4	Chorus

Table 8: Scheme of 'The Way to Jerusalem'.

Sullivan chose to frame this entire section in C (thereby making a much broader cyclical reference to the tonality at the opening of 'Bethlehem'). This tonality underpins the opening recitative (C minor) and the Children's Chorus which

follows, and introduces the descending canonic 'Hosanna' figure. This quasi-archaic gesture of antiphonal lines sets a tone for the whole scene and is a 'motto' element throughout. Keeping within the spirit of this quasi-archaic ambience, Sullivan commences the 'Chorus of Children' with a synthetic melody akin to plainsong, and continues the three-part work for upper voices in a 'stile semplice' of uniform homophony. This yields to the 'motto' theme in the orchestra which ushers in a second choral gesture, this time in a three-part, 'motet' style based on fugal entries of 'Hosanna in the highest'. These two ideas, the one homophonic (to which, incidentally, Sullivan has no compunction appending a quasi-Baroque walking bass), the other polyphonic, interact closely throughout the chorus. In particular the polyphonic entries function as major punctuative elements within the structure, notably in A minor (p. 141) and the reprise (p. 144), while the homophonic idea plays a major role in its augmented 'prayer' form ('Peace in heaven') as an episode (from letter J). And, as a final unifying act in the coda, Sullivan brings together these two contrasting elements with the 'motto' (now vocally realised - from letter L), the 'prayer' and a final reference to the original 'plainsong' melody (p. 147).

The centrepiece of 'The Way to Jerusalem' is the soprano aria 'Tell ye the daughter of Zion' which is the most substantial aria of Part 1 and the one which makes most vocal demands (not least the climactic top B flat - p. 152). The sequential ascending phrases of the soprano's opening lines are strongly connected with the earlier choruses of 'He maketh the sun to rise' and 'The grave cannot praise thee', but more fundamental to the musical edifice of this set piece are the descending phrases

of the accompanimental material which are derived from the 'motto' theme, a connection which is made explicit by its return (p. 153) as a transition to the brief dialogue of a Pharisee and Jesus ('Master, rebuke thy disciples'). The response of the disciples is encapsulated in short *turba* chorus in E flat ('Blessed be the kingdom'), though in this instance, the role of the chorus is preludial to Jesus' final (and seminal) utterance in Part 1, a through-composed arioso in which Jerusalem's role in his ultimate sacrifice is announced ('If thou hadst known, O Jerusalem'). This is a fine and powerful passage, more symptomatic of continental romantic opera and especially reminiscent of some of the music which Gounod composed for *Faust*.

Jesus's arioso leads seamlessly from E flat to the final chorus in C where Sullivan returns to the text of the Children's Chorus, but now for full chorus. Headed by the 'motto' theme, it passes to the polyphonic motet style but this time treated as a four-part fugue with a countersubject drawn from the disciples' chorus. Indeed, Sullivan clearly intended these events to be a more sonorous recapitulation as is evidenced by the reprise of the 'prayer' for chorus and 'angelic' solo voices and the euphoric coda in which the 'motto' appears as a set of four canonic voices.

The scenes of the second part of the oratorio are entirely set in Jerusalem. At this point in the work Sullivan evidently rejected the notion of re-enacting the Passion of Christ (as Elgar was to do later in *The Apostles*). Rather, and more true to the words of his preface to the oratorio, he looked to rely more on the audiences inherent knowledge and understanding of the New Testament by paraphrasing events leading to Christ's betrayal, trial, crucifixion and resurrection and by means

of a free use of scriptural texts not only from the Gospels but also, retrospectively, from the Acts of the Apostles, Paul's letter to the Colossians and the Book of Revelation. In so doing he hoped to manufacture an aggregate, intended to explore both the human side of Christ and other figures in the Passion story while preserving the theological essence of Christian teaching. The principal danger, however, of such a scheme, was that, in omitting many of the quintessential details of Jesus' Passion, it detracted from the story's inherent and deeply personal drama. This, it could be argued, is the fundamental flaw in 'Jerusalem' where the tragedy of Jesus' self-sacrifice seems fragmented and much of the impact of the events leading up to his crucifixion is too condensed and thus too internalised to be entirely effective.

## **Jerusalem (Part 2)**

After the overture which is intended to indicate the angry feeling and dissension caused by Christ's presence in the city, 'Jerusalem', the first of two parts commences with the words relating to the parable of the sheep and goats. The people hearing it are astonished at its boldness and express a mixture of doubt and belief. A ruler argues with them and contemptuously asks if Christ would come out of Galilee. The people are still unconvinced and after Nicodemus strives to reason with them, the ruler retreats angrily. The women, seeing that the end is near, come crying to Christ who tells them not to despair - 'I have overcome the world' is his last prophetic

sentence (see Table 9).

OVERTURE		B flat - with transition to D flat	3/4 - 4/4	Orchestra alone
[Scena] (Jesus): 'When the Son of Man'	Matthew 25.31	D flat	4/4	Baritone
Tenor and Bass ['A Ruler' and 'Nicodemus'] and Chorus: 'Is not this he'	John 7.25 and 7.46	B	4/4	Tenor and Chorus
Chorus of Women: 'The hour is come'	Mark 14.41, Psalm 59.3 and Lamentations 5.17	F#	3/4	Chorus
[Arioso] Baritone (Jesus): 'Daughters of Jerusalem'	Luke 23.28, Matthew 24.21, Luke 21.28 and John 16.33	B	3/4	Baritone
Unaccompanied Chorus: 'Yea, though I walk'	Psalm 23.4	G flat	3/4	Chorus
Chorus: 'Men and brethren'	Acts 13.26-9, Acts 2.22 and Isaiah 53.12	E flat to A flat	4/4	Chorus

Table 9: Scheme of 'Jerusalem'

Sullivan's overture, which effectively counterbalances the pastoral movement at the head of Part 1, is a substantial orchestral essay in B flat minor. An arresting slow introduction looks to portray the hostile atmosphere and brutal world of Rome's occupation of Jerusalem, while the 'Allegro risoluto', a fully worked out sonata movement, owing much to the model of Mendelssohn's concert overtures



(notably *Ruy Blas*),<sup>32</sup> is evocative of the forthcoming struggle and sacrifice in the opening martial material, and this is well contrasted with the more pathetic nature of the second subject in which Christ's human attributes are discernible. This is also true of the more poetic coda which re-establishes D flat major as a tonal conduit to the movement that follows, though this unexpected divergence, which carries the key away from the original tonic, militates against the overture as a 'stand alone' concert piece.

Though Sullivan marks the next movement ('When the Son of Man') simply as 'Solo', it is in fact Jesus' most extended monologue in the whole oratorio and effectively constitutes an entire scene or 'scena'. The focus of Jesus' monologue is the 'Sheep and the Goats', a discourse about judgment (often argued as the Last Judgment), given its greatest prominence in Matthew 25. 31-46 (though there are briefer accounts in Mark and Luke). Couched in that most romantic of keys, D flat, here Sullivan presents the essence of Christian moral teaching. Sullivan's reaction to this didactic episode is one of much greater ambition, where the scope of the musical rhetoric has more in common with, for example, Tannhäuser's monologue in Wagner's eponymous opera (rather than Elijah in Mendelssohn's oratorio). Here there is a greater contemporaneous stature to the vocal delivery and a more imaginative, variegational approach to the structure. In this regard Sullivan

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<sup>32</sup> Sullivan's sonata design is not without a number of interesting structural subtleties. Though the developmental phase is short - perhaps a little too truncated given the dimensions of the first and second subjects - the reversed recapitulation of the two principal thematic ideas is well executed, and gives some prominence to the more tender, human lyrical material of the second subject. The incorporation of the slow introduction towards the end (letter H) is also well executed.

essentially conceived the construction in two parts, each consisting of three subsections. The three subsections, markedly contrasted in terms of rhetoric and in keeping with the nature of Jesus' discourse, are made up of an initial (preludial) recitative, a presentation of the principal thematic material ('Come ye blessed of my Father' - see letter M) and a more melodramatic third idea (see Table 8), constituting the reply of the 'righteous'. In terms of musical content, the recitative (Subsection A) establishes D flat at the outset, but it is with the statement of the main thematic idea that one senses the arrival of the main didactic proclamation. This paragraph (Subsection B) is framed in D flat, though the urgency of Jesus' words is underpinned by more chromatic tonal behaviour in which the basses rises sequentially (though E flat minor and F) before settling on the dominant of A (ten bars after letter N). This is a moment of rare tension superseded only bars later by a digression to the Neapolitan, D ('I was in prison and ye came unto me') as Jesus reaches the first vocal peak of his discourse. The succeeding melodrama (Subsection C), mirrors the tonal fluid nature of Section B, though, embarking from D flat, it moves through the dominant of F to G before reaching its goal of the Neapolitan. Here, deliberately in terms of the drama and Jesus' quizzical rhetoric ('Or when saw we thee sick or in prison and came unto thee?'), the close of the melodrama is left open-ended, leaving the return of the recitative, in which Jesus gives the key to his 'parable'. In telling fashion, at this utterance, Sullivan presents the principal theme in G flat (letter Q), a statement which subsequently throws into relief the recurrence of Subsection B, not in D flat *major*, but D flat *minor*. At this point Jesus damns those

who did not bring him succour and the ensuing paragraph, which formerly ended more reassuringly in D flat, now concludes in E flat (letter S). The melodrama behaves in the same way as before, reaching the Neapolitan (letter T), but this time Sullivan extends its unsettling ambiance by reiterating and prolonging D flat minor ('In as much as ye did it not to one of the least of these') as an expression of 'everlasting punishment', a sentiment which accompanies the peak of the baritone's climax on a high F flat, thus allowing the change of mode to D flat major (and a final reprise of the principal melody in the last three bars) to emphasise the salvation of the righteous (see Table 10).

Musical idea	Rhetorical Character	Text	Key
A	Recitative	'When the Son of Man shall come'	D flat
B	Arioso	'Come ye blessed of my Father'	D flat
C	Melodrama	'Then shall the righteous answer him'	D flat to D
A	Recitative	'And the King shall answer'	D to V of D flat
B	Arioso	'Depart from me cursed into everlasting'	D flat to E flat
C	Melodrama	'Then shall they also answer him'	E flat to d flat
Coda (using B)	Recitative	'But the righteous into life eternal'	D flat

Table 10: Thematic, textural and tonal scheme of 'When the Son of Man'.

After this substantial soliloquy (which looks forward to the even more extensive structures of Job's 'Lamentations' in Parry's oratorio of 1892 and Judas in Elgar's *The Apostles* of 1903), a sequence of three interlinked sections follow, fused by a tonal scheme based on B. The musically weaker scene, 'Is not this he?', attempts to

encapsulate the doubt of Jesus' veracity as the Messiah as set out in John 7.25, though Sullivan presents the text with some licence, dividing it into a dialogue between the *turba* and 'A Ruler' and incorporating a brief appearance of Nicodemus ('Doth our law judge any man') in an episode shortly before the conclusion. The chorus for women ('The hour is come'), which acts as an elegiac interlude in F# minor, takes its text from Mark 14.41 (together with reflections from Psalm 59.3 and Lamentations 5.17) and transports us to the moment immediately before Jesus' arrest in Gethsemane. Sullivan clearly assigned this gentle 'minuet' for women's voices so that Jesus's response ('*Daughters of Sion*'), a serene 'sarabande' in B major, would make sense textually, though in terms of the context, Jesus utters these words as he carries the cross to Golgotha. Lacking the musical intensity of the previous monologue, its modified binary structure relies essentially on melodic force and momentum to sustain Christ's final, climactic words of the oratorio ('I have overcome the world'), underpinned by the baritone's high F#.

At this juncture of solemnity, Sullivan's dramatic instincts served him well. In turning to the chorus for reflective comment in the form of a partsong and a verse from the most familiar of psalms, Psalm 23 (verse 4), he genuinely came close to achieving that sense of darkness, gravity and loss which the Gospel texts convey at the moment of Christ's death. The effect of the unaccompanied idiom with its hymn-like homophony (one which Sullivan was currently familiar from his work on *Church Hymns*) is particularly telling as is the rarified tonality of G flat and the simple form (Stainer was to achieve the same impact in *The Crucifixion* fourteen years later with

'God so loved the world').

As a conspicuous contrast to the simplicity and economy of this *a cappella* intermezzo, the final chorus of 'Jerusalem' is a composite structure of choral recitative for male chorus (surely drawn from S. S. Wesley's manner of choral declamation in his verse anthems), choral narrative (for full chorus) and choral peroration. Here Sullivan chose to recount the manner of Jesus' Passion through the words of Luke's Acts of the Apostles. The first two parts are set in E flat minor and, in the case of the second part ('Jesus of Nazareth'), the events are described retrospectively in a through-composed structure in which the chorus, by dint of their uniform homophonic texture, narrate as one voice accompanied by a martial orchestral ostinato figure. This figure dissipates by degrees, but is completely expunged by the musical 'genuflection' allied with the description of the crucifixion itself and Christ's burial (from letter E). Functioning as a preparatory dominant, E flat then yields to short yet concise closing chorus in A flat - the goal and resolution of this tripartite design - in which Sullivan returned to the prophetic words of Isaiah 53.12 ('Therefore will God divide him a portion with the great'), thereby invoking a sense of apotheosis to the larger scene.

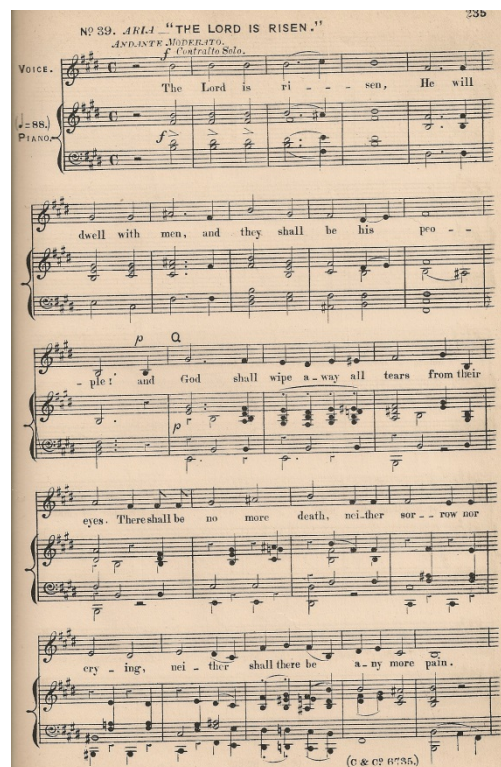
### **At the Sepulchre - Morning (Part 2)**

It is quite likely that Sullivan must have realised by this point in his oratorio that the work was already one of gargantuan proportions, and that he might have ended the

work with the previous scene, albeit with, perhaps, a larger and more substantial choral statement. However, it is evident from the final scene - 'At the Sepulchre: Morning' - that his work could not be finished without allusion to the resurrection. In consequence, and perhaps to create some equilibrium with Christ's monologue of the previous scene, he conceived a sequence of sections in E inspired by the biblical scene immediately after the resurrection, one that was dominated entirely by the female soloists of Mary Magdalene (soprano) and an Angel (contralto). What is more, the intensity of the dramatic situation seems to have encouraged Sullivan to write some of his best music. The short introductory intermezzo for orchestra is one of the most expressive passages in the whole oratorio, its leaping sevenths (especially after letter A) conveying a sense of yearning and distress on Mary Magdalene's discovery of the empty tomb. This material forms the accompanimental basis of Mary's ensuing recitative which is itself preludial to a much more extensive aria ('Lord, why hidest thou thy face'). In fact, Mary's interrogative aria, to all effects and purposes, a 'scena', acts to counterbalance Christ's scena in the previous scene. A multi-sectioned structure of some considerable tonal interest (note the passage from E minor to B flat from letter E, and the central section which embarks from F# major), the initial ternary form expands with a passage of melodrama ('I am in misery' - p. 232) to vivacious coda replete with climactic top B, exhorting the Saviour to arise.

To this composite design Sullivan added two further movements in E, the first a recitative (from Matthew 28.5) and aria for contralto (an Angel). The latter, which draws on the moving words from Revelation 21 ('And God shall wipe away all tears

from their eyes'), probably contains the composer's most memorable and affecting melody and would not have been out of place among Sullivan's drawing room ballads. Mary's aria commences with the Easter 'affirmation' ('The Lord is risen') which is taken up by the *a cappella* chorus that follows as a recurring 'motto'. As a gesture of reflection it is one of Sullivan's most edifying. With a text taken from Acts



Example 11: Contralto aria 'The Lord is risen'.

2.32 ('This Jesus hath God raised up'), the chorus attempts to achieve a distinctive ecclesiastical earnestness, not only in terms of its synthetic plainchant but also through the use of the six-part 'Renaissance' texture; moreover, the miraculous event

of the resurrection is accentuated by two uplifting, ornamented citations of the 'Dresden Amen' (from letters A and five after letter C) which complement the chorus's archaic ambience.

Sullivan's conclusion to the chorus also reveals additional artifice in that the final recurrence of the 'affirmation' is in C (the flat submediant), a tonal event which participates in the chorus's final Phrygian cadence to E as V of A minor. Yet A minor is subtly part of an oblique progression to C major which forms and constitutes the tonality of the last aria of the oratorio for tenor ('A Disciple'), using a Mendelssohnian *topos* of three-part counterpoint (as one finds in so many of the *Songs Without Words*). The role of this aria, in which the text is taken from Paul's letter to the Colossians, was intended to be didactic, in that, after the vast canvas of character examination, the oratorio ends with an assertion of faith in Christ's resurrection. This is also true of the final chorus (from Revelation), a lively set-piece fugue (in the same manner as *Elijah*) and coda in which, theologically, Jesus' atonement is ecstatically acknowledged and the key of C, the oratorio's overarching tonality, is confirmed (see Table 11).

Intermezzo		E		Orchestra
Recit (Mary): 'Where have they laid Him?'	Mark 16, Samuel 2 12.23 and Jeremiah 45.3	E	4/4	Soprano
Aria [Scena] (Mary): 'Lord, why hidest thou thy face?'	Psalm 88.14	E	3/4	Soprano
Recit. (Angel):	Matthew 28.5	E	4/4	Contralto



'Fear not, ye seek Jesus which was crucified'				
Aria [Angel]: 'The Lord is risen'	Revelation 21	E	4/4	Contralto
Chorus (unaccompanied) a6: 'The Lord is risen'	Acts 2.32	E	4/4	Chorus
Aria (a Disciple): 'If ye be risen with Christ'	Colossians 3.1-3, Timothy 1.6.12	C	4/4	Tenor
Chorus: 'Him hath God exalted'	Acts 5.31	C	4/4	Chorus
Chorus: 'Now is come salvation and strength'	Revelation 12.10			

Table 11: Scheme of 'At the Sepulchre: Morning'

The Birmingham critic described *The Light of the World* as 'the magnum opus of its author, a credit both to himself and the great meeting for which it was expressly written'.<sup>33</sup> The performance, under Sullivan's baton, was 'for a first essay with a long and difficult composition, remarkable even for the Birmingham chorus singers and the splendid orchestra usually assembled by the Triennial Festivals'.<sup>34</sup> The performance lasted for almost three and a half hours. The principal singers were familiar names in Sullivan premieres: Titiens, Trebelli-Bettini, Sims Reeves, Briggs and Santley. It was not long before *The Light of the World* was heard in London and in a review of events included in a Crystal Palace concert proclaimed that 'at another concert two extracts from Mr Arthur S. Sullivan's *Light of the World*, given with

<sup>33</sup> *The Times*, 28 August 1873.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

such success at the Birmingham Festival in August, were introduced for the first time to a Crystal Palace audience'<sup>35</sup> The concluding parts of the oratorio were the extracts given and in the first ('At Bethlehem') the reviewer comments that 'Mr Sullivan has shown with what safety he can follow in the footsteps of earlier composers, employing the same key (though not precisely the same measure) as is used by Handel in his comparable 'Pastoral Symphony' of the Messiah and yet speaking after a manner of his own'.<sup>36</sup> As for the episode 'At Jerusalem', the critic declared that:

Mr Sullivan takes a higher flight, having a more difficult theme to treat, viz, the troubles and dissensions created at Jerusalem by the presence, the teaching and the miracles of Christ. The first prepares for the Advent, the last has to do with its important results. In each case Mr Sullivan shows his ability to shape the materials at hand with the judgement and facility of a master.<sup>37</sup>

There is no doubt that from this time on, *The Light of the World* seems to have had fewer performances by the choral societies, at least in London, because on 29 May 1878, when Sullivan had just premiered *H.M.S. Pinafore*, *The Light of the World* was given at the Royal Albert Hall. The article in *The Times* which reviewed the concert began:

The tenth concert of Mr Barnby's choir introduced Mr Sullivan's oratorio *The Light of the World*. It is not a new work, having been produced at the Birmingham Festival in 1873, but the long interval which has elapsed since it was heard last - a striking illustration, by the way, of the neglect with which important works by English composers are too frequently treated in their own country seems to make a few recapitulatory remarks on our part desirable.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> *The Times*, 5 November 1873.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>38</sup> *The Times*, 30 May 1878.

The reviewer proceeded to comment on the story dealt with by the oratorio and of Sullivan's intentions in dealing with the character of Christ and went on to highlight the two main problems with which Sullivan had to contend having had 'to avoid the appearance of an intended competition with Handel or Bach and he had to realize the human presence of the Saviour without touching upon the Divine qualities which, in this Country at least, are not considered the subject for dramatic treatment, however reverential'.<sup>39</sup> In conceiving Christ as he did in this oratorio, Sullivan clearly found himself in a dilemma. The character of Christ, with all his human frailties, naturally appealed to his theatrical instincts, but it was by no means an easy task to create a convincing 'libretto' from the intractable texts of the Bible. Moreover, since, in Britain, it was the accepted tradition *only* to use biblical texts for oratorical works, Sullivan found himself hemmed in. In retrospect, too, the choice to explore Christ's humanity was also an error on his part, for, in attempting to 'summarise' the events of his life - which were in themselves highly dramatic and emotional - he denied himself the very oxygen of his own natural musical impulses. Only once does the full panoply of this emerge, in Christ's major scena of Part 2 and, perhaps, in some of the transitional passages of recitative, though there are hints of it in several of the solo 'set-piece' arias (such as 'Tell ye the daughter of Sion'). Somewhat ironically, the composer's romantic imagination is as much evident in the scene-setting preludes such as 'In Bethany', 'Where have they laid him?' and the fine overture to Part 2 where there is some potent indications of Sullivan's ability to handle modern

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

musical apparatus.

A further irony, perhaps, is that, given the imperative of the oratorio as a genre, and the particularly exacting challenge of a 'Birmingham' oratorio, Sullivan devoted much of his energy and ingenuity to the chorus work and it is here that one not only sees the composer's exceptional technical powers as a contrapuntist but also his creative imagination to use chorus in a variety of contexts. This is certainly true of 'In Ramah was there a voice heard', much of the section of 'The Way to Jerusalem', the unaccompanied choruses and the treatment of fugal forms.

There must have been a feeling that the work was long even by the standards of the day, because the report pointed out that:

Mr Sullivan may possibly contemplate modifying parts, abridging others and by the aid of condensation, bring the incidents closer together. Upon this subject it would be superfluous to dwell, the composer being himself the best judge of what to do and how to do it. It is to be wished that he will not revise too much, for the habit of reconsidering things instead of entering at once upon some new task, is, if too frequently indulged in, hardly to be praised without qualification.<sup>40</sup>

The reviewer thought that even as it stood, the work was full of interest from the first chorus to the last. However, Findon, Sullivan's cousin pointed out, years later, that 'in after years Sullivan himself recognized certain defects in *The Light of the World* and expressed his intention of condensing and revising it, but the task was continually postponed, and his intentions remained unfulfilled'.<sup>41</sup> At the time, most seemed to concur with the correspondent of *The Times* when he declared the piece to be 'a work which we cannot but regard as an honour to the English school of music

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<sup>40</sup> *The Times*, 3 September 1873.

<sup>41</sup> Findon 1904. 75

and take it all in all [to be the] best oratorio for which we are indebted to an English musician'.<sup>42</sup> Significantly though, at the performance of the newly-founded Liverpool Musical Festival in the Philharmonic Hall (which existed before the current art deco hall of the same name), Sullivan himself made judicious cuts to the score even though, ironically, this attracted criticism. The reviewer of the Liverpool performance noted that 'Mr Sullivan has made certain curtailments - abridging this piece and omitting that, but although the oratorio, which by reason of the nature of its subject, necessitates a more than ordinary quantity of declamatory narrative, is inevitably long, we cannot entirely approve the modification, which, owing to circumstances, the author felt himself compelled to make'.<sup>43</sup> Indeed, the reviewer went so far as to suggest that Sullivan would have been wiser to have written a second oratorio instead of cutting portions since 'the thing as it stood was excellent. Why then revise it?'.<sup>44</sup> This view seemed to fall in with the general consensus of opinion amongst Sullivan's contemporaries. As previously stated, Gounod 'declared it to be a masterpiece',<sup>45</sup> and the Queen (who took a great deal of interest in Sullivan's career) was moved to declare that *The Light of the World* was 'destined to uplift British music',<sup>46</sup> views which equated with the Liverpool critics comments that 'The Light of the World today created much the same impression as at Birmingham last year. The general conviction when the young musician brought it out was that a

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<sup>42</sup> *The Times*, 3 September 1873.

<sup>43</sup> *The Times*, 2 October 1874.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>45</sup> Brahms 1975, 57.

<sup>46</sup> Bailey 1952, 119.

new work of genius had been added to the repertory of sacred music.'<sup>47</sup>

In 1879 *The Times* correspondent reviewing a performance at Hereford gave an indication of the popularity of the piece when he wrote that 'Dr Arthur Sullivan's oratorio ---may now be said to have the freedom of many of our important and influential towns, including among their number (added to Birmingham, its birthplace) Manchester, Liverpool, Bradford, Nottingham [and] Dundee -'.<sup>48</sup> The article is significant in that it draws attention to the fact that the oratorio 'is replete with melody - exhibiting dramatic power - and where the rare incidents of the book, so obviously constructed out of scriptural texts by Mr George Grove, offer appropriate suggestions for dramatic treatment, but mainly inspired from end to end by the purest instinct of devotional feeling'.<sup>49</sup> Given the general approbation of the oratorio's reception, there was the inevitable call on Sullivan to write more oratorio:

He, the lively and humorous creator of the *Contrabandista*, *Cox and Box*, *The Sorcerer* and *H.M.S. Pinafore* has proven in his first, it is to be hoped not his last, oratorio, that on a fitting occasion he can measure arms with Felix Mendelssohn, that where purpose serves he can show how thoroughly he is involved with the spirit of Handel and how in such exceptional circumstances --- he can turn even the great Bach to account - Mr Sullivan is not simply an eclectic, but in his way an original composer. That he has a style and manner of his own is clearly evinced by a large variety of works in almost every form.<sup>50</sup>

Gounod hailed the oratorio as a masterpiece (a significant source of reception, given the later success the composer enjoyed with his own Birmingham oratorio *The Redemption* in 1882) and Queen Victoria believed that the work was 'destined to

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<sup>47</sup> *The Times*, 2 October 1874.

<sup>48</sup> *The Times*, 29 September 1879.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*

uplift British music.<sup>51</sup> Moreover, the skill with which it was recognised that Sullivan had brought to the genre of oratorio might also provoke him into the production of a second symphony, the composition of which had been 'inexplicably delayed.'<sup>52</sup>

Yet, from available secondary sources, it appears that *The Light of the World* was hastily scored. Indeed, Brahms pointed out that 'the entire work occupied Sullivan less than a month.'<sup>53</sup> implying perhaps that it was a job of work (like the publication of *Church Hymns*) that he had to complete and that his heart was not in the project, which given all the work that went in to its composition seems hard to believe. Whatever the case, Sullivan seems to have harboured doubts about his oratorio, because as Findon pointed out:

Whether the reception accorded *The Light of The World* fell short of his expectations, and so discouraged him from attempting anything further in the direction of oratorio, or whether it was that he was beginning to realise that his talent needed a stronger dramatic form of expression, and that he saw in the stage a more remunerative sphere, the fact remains that he gave no further attention to sacred or quasi-sacred music until in 1878, he was invited by the Leeds Festival Committee to write an oratorio for the Festival of 1880. To this request he replied after the largesse of many weeks, and it will be seen that he had no keen desire to do anything on the ambitious scale of *The Light of the World*. Further, he had just passed through a crisis in the incurable malady from which he suffered, and, what perhaps was even more to the purpose, the year previous he had, in collaboration with W. S. Gilbert, delved into the gold mine of comic opera.<sup>54</sup>

Comic opera being a 'gold mine' was only one of the reasons which kept Sullivan writing it. After the extremely prolonged and serious effort he put into his oratorio, he perhaps found that his strengths and the capacity of his musical language were

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<sup>51</sup> Sullivan & Flower, 74.

<sup>52</sup> *The Times*, 29 September 1879.

<sup>53</sup> Brahms 1975, 57.

<sup>54</sup> Findon 1904, 76.

by now better suited to shorter compositions. Certainly he never attempted so long a work again and he avoided Biblical subjects for the rest of his career.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### *THE MARTYR OF ANTIOCH* (A Sacred Musical Drama):

#### A GILBERT-AND-SULLIVAN 'ORATORIO'

Sullivan gave an insight into his compositional life when he was asked how the amount of work he devoted to one of his operas compared with the effort that a concert work would demand of him. Sullivan maintained that there was no comparison between the two cases, and although people seemed to think that he could write a Savoy Opera without much difficulty and quite quickly, he pointed out that:

Comic operas light and airy as they are may seem to give me far more trouble and anxiety than a cantata like *The Golden Legend*. In the latter case, you see, I am quite irresponsible. I have no one to consider but my band and my singers. There is no stage business to worry about and I can make sure of my effects, because I know just how all the component parts of my body of executants will be placed. It is all straight forward and simple -- no, my *Martyr of Antioch* and *Golden Legend*, strange as it may seem, give me far less mental anxiety than my *Pinafore* and *Pirates*.<sup>1</sup>

These were telling comments, for the general wisdom of the time remained that, having devoted his earlier years to the composition of serious choral works, he had then squandered his talents in London's theatres. Yet, as is evident from his remarks above, the commission of his later choral works gave him far less cause for apprehension.

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<sup>1</sup> *Pall Mall Gazette*, 5 December 1889.

In 1880 new opportunities for the composition of choral works presented themselves when Sullivan was appointed Director of the Leeds Triennial Festival, considered the rival in terms of prestige and resources to Birmingham. Sullivan, of course, had a track record as a conductor. He directed his own works from the podium (a standard and accepted practice of the time) and enjoyed a reputation for his orchestral music at the Philharmonic Society. Indeed, some years later he became the conductor of the Philharmonic Society. Liked by the players, he conducted from a chair in a somewhat phlegmatic manner, eyes fixed on the score, a motionless left hand, which differed markedly from the more gesticulative Richter conducting from memory.<sup>2</sup> (The comparison no doubt greatly irritated Sullivan who was antagonistic towards Richter after his appointment to Birmingham.) Leeds, of course, offered a major opportunity to work with generous resources - a large orchestra and choir - something unavailable to him through the usual 'combo' of the theatrical orchestra pit. Moreover, Sullivan liked choral music, and his former experiences had not dulled his enjoyment of the idiom.

At the meeting of the Provisional Committee convened to begin making arrangements for the 1880 Leeds Musical Festival on 12 December 1877, a resolution was passed to the effect that 'the honorary secretary communicate with Mr Arthur Sullivan as to writing an oratorio for the festival of 1880'. The decision was no doubt

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<sup>2</sup> Ehrlich, C., *First Philharmonic* (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 1995), 146-7. Unfortunately Sullivan's relationship with the Philharmonic came to a head when he was forever postponing, cancelling and being absent from rehearsal. Things came to a head in 1887 when, 'indisposed' in Naples, he disappointed an audience who had paid much to see him, and the rest of the season witnessed sub-standard attendance.

inculcated to enhance the appointment of Sullivan to the conductorship of the festival. The secretary, Frederick Spark, accordingly wrote to Sullivan 'I need hardly tell you with what completeness, force and emotional choral power we should perform your work, our recent production of Macfarren's 'Joseph' will be fresh in your memory, if you read or heard the universal praise bestowed upon the Leeds Festival performance.'<sup>3</sup> Sullivan, as was frequently the case, was abroad when the letter arrived and he was still away when a second letter arrived on the 18 February. Three weeks later Sullivan telegraphed from London saying 'Just returned home. Will answer your letter tonight'. On 12 March he replied:

When I received your first letter at Nice, I was so ill and worn out that I at once wrote declining the offer of the Leeds Festival. But on consideration, I thought it would be wise to keep it back for a short time, in case I might get better and stronger. I was constantly ill at Nice. Consequently the letter was never sent. On my arrival home yesterday I found that you had written to me again, and also to Mr Low who unfortunately has been ill, and still is, in Italy. I beg, therefore, you will accept my expressions of my sincere regret at the delay in answering you. I am much better now, and feel more disposed to entertain the proposal which the committee have done the honour to make to me. I could not, however, undertake the composition of an oratorio which should occupy the whole of a concert. For that I should have no time. But I should not be unwilling to write a work of about the same length as *The Prodigal Son* - a work of about an hour and a half, and forming one part of a concert. Will you convey this to the committee and let me know their view on the subject.<sup>4</sup>

All this is very significant, both for an understanding of the man and the music he produced. Sullivan's protestations and his refusal to write a full length oratorio and his preference to have two years in which to write a much shorter work all seem to

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<sup>3</sup> Letter from Spark to Sullivan dated 2 January 1878, *History of the Leeds Musical Festivals*, Spark F. & Bennett, J.; op. cit. in Findon, 1904, 77.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

cast doubt on Sullivan's willingness to devote himself to the writing of serious works and though still only thirty-five, by this stage of his career most of his serious works were already behind him. It seems that Sullivan's early promise in symphonic writing and in oratorio had either burnt itself out or that he simply had no desire to apply himself to that kind of work once he had discovered, as Stainer feared, the lucrative and more congenial world of operetta.

The commission from Leeds had in fact been established two years earlier in March 1878, but at that time he had considered the story of David and Jonathan,<sup>5</sup> a subject which was ideally suited to the notion of an oratorio. However, this proved unworkable for him, because as he told Spark 'I search the Scriptures daily only to find that the best verses for filling up in the orthodox fashion have been used by oratorio writers before me. If I take these, there will always be comparisons drawn as to the setting. One will say "Handel's music to these words is much better" or "Mendelssohn's ideas are superior to Sullivan's."' <sup>6</sup> However, by 1880, Sullivan had second thoughts about this rather epic material, and turned instead to the poem, *The Martyr of Antioch*, by Dean Henry Hart Milman (Dean of St Paul's Cathedral), a prominent historian and eminent theologian. Perhaps best known for his hymn 'Ride on, ride on, in majesty' for Palm Sunday, Milman had cut his teeth as a young man as a dramatist with the tragedy *Fazio* (produced for the stage under the title *The Italian Wife*), but success came in 1820 with a poem entitled *The Fall of Jerusalem* and,

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<sup>5</sup> Jacobs, A., *Arthur Sullivan* (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 1986), 139.

<sup>6</sup> Findon 1904, 79-80.

after his election as Professor of Poetry at Oxford, with *The Martyr of Antioch* in 1822. This poem, well known in literary circles, was based on the life of Saint Margaret the Virgin in the third century. Though Saint Margaret's existence has been considered doubtful, and she was declared apocryphal by Pope Galasius I in 494, devotion to her grew in the western church particularly during the years of the Crusades, and the story of her martyrdom continued to be a powerful inspiration, and her cult was enormously popular in England where many churches, including such establishments as St Margaret's Church, Westminster were named after her. The popularity of her actions and deeds was also a spur to religious poets such as Milman who found a Byronesque romanticism and passion in the narrative. As one critic remarked, a mixture of early English romantic poets could be found in the pages of Milman's ambitious verse:

The words chosen for Mr Sullivan's cantata are a selection from Dean Milman's well-known sacred drama tastefully and carefully adapted to musical purposes by Mr W.S. Gilbert who has reduced the dialogue by more than two-thirds, leaving only sufficient to explain the plot, if plot it can be called. In considering Milman's verses we need to have in mind the period in which they were written: Shelley and Keats, the creators of modern poetic diction, were comparatively unknown, the later and greater works of Byron were mentioned with bated breath as the emanations of the 'satanic school', whilst the first cantos of 'Childe Harold' seem to mark the acme of pathos. The Martyr of Antioch is fully characteristic of this epoch.<sup>7</sup>

Sullivan approached Gilbert, fresh from their collaboration in *The Pirates of Penzance* at the Opera Comique, to ask if a libretto might be made from the poem for the purposes of a choral work. Gilbert acceded and went about the task of altering Milman's words (for which Sullivan had gained permission from the poets' descendants to select and modify) to alter the blank verse. Milman's original poem

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<sup>7</sup> *Leeds Mercury*, 16 October 1880.

was very long and Gilbert inevitably had to leave out a great many minor details and characters in order to reduce the story to its basic essentials. Originally, for example, Margarita was merely the most important among a number of Christians interrogated and eventually executed, while the long and impassioned words Gilbert put into her mouth originally belonged to Bishop Fabius, who assumed a more realistic position as the leader of the Christians. In the work as it stands, Fabius's role was drastically cut. The whole of the long introductory chorus of sun-worshippers, which was transferred almost without a cut, was written all in the same metre, but it is impossible to tell this from the way that Sullivan sets it with its constant changes of time and atmosphere and its use of the different sections of the chorus. The quartet 'have mercy, unrelenting heav'n' was entirely Gilbert's invention which he used as a further means of prolonging the dramatic tension before Margarita makes her final choice to die for her faith.

Sullivan acknowledged Gilbert's contribution in his preface saying that 'to his friend Mr W.S. Gilbert is due the change in which in one or two cases has been necessary from blank verse to rhyme, and for these and many valuable suggestions, he returns Mr Gilbert his warm acknowledgements'.<sup>8</sup> Sullivan also gave Gilbert a silver cup inscribed 'W. S. Gilbert from his friend Arthur Sullivan Leeds Festival 1880 The Martyr of Antioch'.<sup>9</sup> In return, Gilbert wrote to Sullivan saying that:

It always seemed to me that my particularly humble services in connection with the Leeds Festival had received far more than their meed of acknowledgment in your

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<sup>8</sup> Sullivan's Preface to the vocal score, Chappell & Co, 1880.

<sup>9</sup> Now in the collection of John Wolfson.

pre-amble to the libretti - and it most certainly never occurred to me to look for any other reward than the honour of being associated, however remotely and unworthily, in a success which, I suppose, will endure until music itself shall die. Pray believe that of the many substantial advantages that have resulted to me from our association, this last is, and always will be, the most highly prized.<sup>10</sup>

This was high praise indeed, and illustrates a period in which the partnership was at its most cordial and about to embark on their next collaboration, *Patience*.

Sullivan also consulted Grove, and Jacobs has suggested that he may have come across Milman's poem in the library of Thomas Helmore at St Luke's College, Chelsea.<sup>11</sup> The choice of such a work, as Jacobs has posited, was not strictly ideal for traditional oratorio or cantata. To begin with, the subject was not biblical as was considered essentially *de rigueur* for the form at places such as Birmingham, Leeds and the Three Choirs Festivals. Often, too, the use of biblical text meant that it had to be used without tampering or change, especially if it dealt with New Testament, Christian themes, and, most specifically the speech of Jesus. In selecting a poem about a Christian martyr, however, Sullivan had greater freedom with his text, but elected to call his work a 'Sacred Musical Drama' rather than a sacred cantata. This may well have been because, in reality, the work's demeanour had more in common with opera and the stage and only retained its connection with cantata owing to the major role of the chorus (obviously *de rigueur* from the point of view of the Leeds Festival Committee) and the sacred theme.

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<sup>10</sup> Sullivan & Flower, 1927, 111.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 142. See also footnote 9 Chapter 2.

The story of Saint Margaret (called Marina by the eastern church) had many of those dramatic ingredients ideal for an operatic production. The daughter of a pagan priest, Adesius, she was nursed and raised away from Antioch where she became a Christian and embraced celibacy. This estranged her from her father, and she was then taken into the care of her nurse with whom she tended sheep. Within the Roman world and the reign of Diocletian, however, the subject of her Christianity became a matter of fatal contention. The Prefect of the Eastern Roman Diocese, Olybius, asked for her hand in marriage but only if she agreed to renounce her Christian faith. This she refused to do; torture followed which invoked miraculous happenings and she was finally put to death as a martyr in 304 by decapitation.

For Sullivan's libretto, five major characters were selected for the *dramatis personae*. Margarita, as she was called, was conceived in the role of heroic soprano and Olybius, an unsympathetic tyrant in the poem, became the tenor role. To these two were added the contralto role of Julia, and two basses, Callias (here doubling up as a Priest of Apollo and Margarita's father) and Fabius (Bishop of Antioch). The adaptation of Milman's poem by Gilbert makes a great deal out of Margarita's self-sacrifice when faced with a choice between human love and devotion to her faith. In this dilemma and tragic outcome, Sullivan attempted to give Margarita a timeless human face and it is not difficult to feel some sense of sympathy both for Callias and Olybius, who are by no means stereotypical dramatic archetypes, and who both have no choice but to accept the inevitability of the execution of the



woman they love. The latter, too, was a matter of some quandary for Sullivan. Milman's poem described the heroine's death with the line 'the axe? It fell'. Sullivan did not appear to like this because of the fear of being thought too overtly operatic and theatrical, so he opted for a death - as a funeral pyre – (at Gilbert's suggestion) that had more modern connotations with heretical executions of the Tudor era.

Sullivan conceived his work for Leeds's large chorus. At the first performance there were 75 sopranos, 34 male altos, 41 contraltos, 78 tenors and 78 basses - in all 306 singers, with a large orchestra of 112 players (which traditionally consisted, as at Birmingham, of double wind, and brass which included an ophicleide rather than a tuba). One particular feature of the Leeds choir was its contingent of male altos, a sound which must have given the chorus a particularly bright edge. Accommodating this element, Sullivan gave an allotted stave to the male altos, asking them expressly *not* to sing during those dramatic moments reserved for women. The choral parts of the work first became available on 31 August 1880 when Sullivan rehearsed the chorus for the first time. After attending a Belgian health clinic in September, and having finished much of the proof-reading of the score and parts, he returned via Paris to London to rehearse the festival orchestra, which was always made up mainly of London professionals. After a week-long series of rehearsals of the entire Leeds programme, Sullivan moved up to Leeds for the festival proper. The first performance of *The Martyr of Antioch* took place in the presence of the festival's president, the Duke of Edinburgh, on Friday, 15 October. He was blessed with fine soloists - Emma Albani as Margarita, Janet Patey as Julia

and Edward Lloyd as Olybius - although Santley, whom Sullivan had hoped would take the bass role of Callias, spurned the festival after he was offended by the fee offered to him; hence the role was taken by Frederick King and the small part of Fabius by Henry Cross.<sup>12</sup>

The reception of the work was hugely enthusiastic at Leeds among the audience and performers. Indeed, such was the approbation that Sullivan received, that he was asked to conduct the next six festivals. An adulatory review from the *Leeds Mercury* issued the day after the performance bears witness to the success Sullivan enjoyed:

The cheers which greeted the arrival of Mr Sullivan were renewed with still more vigour and enthusiasm at the close of his new work. The masculine members of the chorus hailed him with a hearty Yorkshire 'hooray', while the ladies waved their handkerchiefs in token of congratulation. The whole assemblage, indeed, joined in a hearty tumult of praise -- the strength of *The Martyr of Antioch* lies in its beautiful Pagan choruses, so full of character and colour; in the first and last airs of Margarita - - in the Funeral music of the Christians; in the love music of Olybius; and with reference to the entire work, in charmingly varied and appropriately coloured orchestration - the dramatic portions of the Cantata -- are inferior in treatment and consequently in result, to those of a lyrical nature. Hence a comparative want of effect in the scene between Margarita and her father, and between the same person and her lover, when revelation is made of a change in her faith, meaning nothing less than death to convert. This opinion, however, is based on purely dramatic situations and considering the situation from a musical point of view there is nothing in the work we would willingly have sacrificed to make room for dramatic expansion - a word is certainly called for by Mr Sullivan's orchestrations. Few living composers know better than our composer how to employ the resources of instrumentation - he uses the orchestra, as not abusing it, charming attentive ears by touches of delicate fancy and in form and pleasing cultured tastes by a harmony of colour - all this the scoring of *The Martyr of Antioch* proves beyond dispute. It never wearies by sameness or repels by eccentricity. It is never assuming in forcing its way

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<sup>12</sup> Jacobs, 143.

to the front and it seems to curtail the general interest of the work without distracting attention from points on which attention should be fixed.<sup>13</sup>

The press, however, were lukewarm. Joseph Bennett, who had always been an admirer and staunch supporter, expressed doubts in the *Daily Telegraph* about the dramatic coherence which he felt was subordinate to a more lyrical demeanour. 'Our judgment may warn us of too much lyricism, and that the dramatic element is being hurriedly passed by,' although Bennett nevertheless commended Sullivan for the quality of his 'lyrical' invention.<sup>14</sup> Bennett's critique, of some 3,000 words, arrived at the conclusion that, for all its charm, drama had been sacrificed to lyricism. *The Athenaeum* perceived a work that sounded strangely dated in that its dramatic parlance hearkened back to an earlier manner of theatrical rhetoric which had now been superseded (presumably by that of Wagner).<sup>15</sup> Not all critics agreed, notably the *Leeds Mercury* which, while admitting that it was not flawless, considered it a work 'worthy of Mr Sullivan's repute',<sup>16</sup> and George Grossmith pronounced it 'a glorious inspiration.'<sup>17</sup>

In spite of the critical lack of enthusiasm, the response from choral societies large and small, was impassioned. Sullivan conducted the first London performance at the Crystal Palace on 11 December 1880. The Royal Albert Hall Choral Society, always keen to take up new indigenous works, performed it with the same soloists

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<sup>13</sup> *Leeds Mercury*, 16 October 1880.

<sup>14</sup> *Daily Telegraph*, 18 October 1880.

<sup>15</sup> *The Athenaeum*, op. cit. Jacobs, 144.

<sup>16</sup> *The Musical World*, 23 October 1880, 674.

<sup>17</sup> *The Pall Mall Magazine* (February 1901), 250.

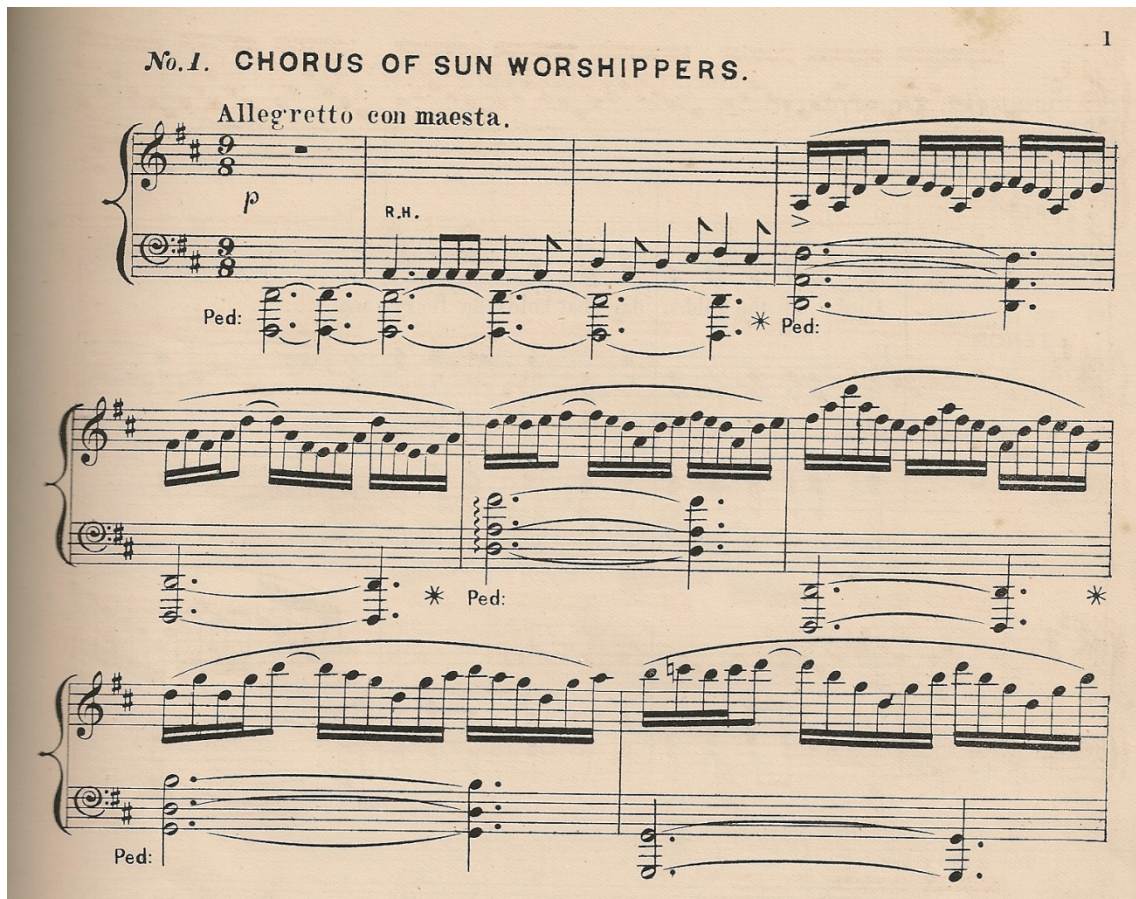
as at Leeds in the presence of the Prince of Wales and other members of the royal family. The Sacred Harmonic Society sang it on 11 February 1881 and, four days later, it was given in Brighton at 'Mr Kuhe's Festival'. Norwich followed suit on 12 September 1881 with a performance which Sullivan directed and there was no dwindling of enthusiasm as the work was taken up by the London Church Choir Association (3 November 1881), the Hackney Choral Association (14 November 1881) and the People's Concert Society (21 October 1882). Performances were less common thereafter, but there is still evidence that it was considered a new and vibrant work. The Huddersfield Choral Society performed it on 7 March 1884 and Sullivan conducted it twice in Bath (8 March 1886) and Nottingham (16 March 1886). Norwich performed it again in 1890 (again directed by the composer) and in Nottingham (28 October 1891), and it appeared at the Crystal Palace on 5 November 1892 under August Manns. In 1898 it received two performances in Edinburgh and Brighton before the Carl Rosa Opera Company decided to stage it in a slightly altered form. Excerpts, however, kept the work in the public consciousness, particularly the 'Funeral Anthem' which became a regular fixture for funerals and memorial commemorations.

In truth, there is abundant evidence of Sullivan's dramatic instincts in *The Martyr of Antioch*, not only in the way the libretto is handled (especially at the close), but also in many theatrical gestures. These are imparted by both chorus and soloists throughout the four scenes of the drama, but perhaps the preponderance of lyricism to which Bennett alluded was due in part to the tension that existed for Sullivan

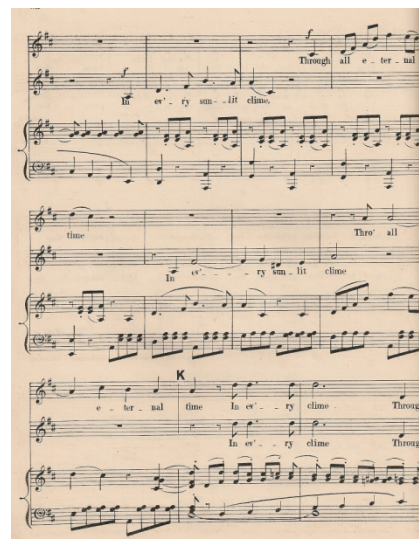
between the need for dramatic momentum and action and the imperative of writing more sustained, developed movements, a feature which, within the domain of concert music and the choral idiom ran counter to the requirements of dramaturgical theory and timing. Furthermore, Sullivan had to confront the reality that the sense of plot in *The Martyr of Antioch* is both simple and terse. There is little complication in terms of dramatic events within the narrative and much of the emphasis was perceived to be an exhibition of poetic opulence. Audiences and critics, familiar with the slick interaction of the Savoy operettas, were less accustomed to the more extended arias and choruses and this may have been central to their disappointment with the dramatic cohesion and momentum.

Nevertheless much of the musical material in *The Martyr* is redolent of French opera, particularly the works of Gounod, Massenet and Saint-Saëns, and this can be felt in the handling of the chorus (which extends beyond the *turba* and reflective roles), the pacing of the arias, the theatrical vocal gestures and the sense of 'histrionic' tragedy that attends the work's plot, features which undoubtedly persuaded Sullivan that it was inherently a *dramatic* work. Scene 1, 'The Front of the Temple of Apollo', is prefaced by a typically theatrical 'Vorspiel' featuring the presentation of a fanfare-like theme for full orchestra, but repeated in a quite different guise for hushed tremolando strings and solo trumpet (in anticipation of Margarita's final aria and melodrama). Such a prelude might have featured in a mid-nineteenth-century French opera by Meyerbeer, Bizet or Ambroise Thomas or in Verdi's *risorgimento* operas of the 1850s such as *La Traviata*. As an auspicious

beginning to the four scenes, Sullivan's first chorus (with central solo) in Scene 1 is a substantial design and functions as a quasi-Prologue in the form of a choral litany. A substantial design, this *turba* chorus of 'Sun-worshippers' conformed with the typical 'opening chorus' of an oratorio or cantata except that its divisions of male chorus (with male altos), female chorus and full chorus were used with more dramatic intent, and its introduction of numerous thematic ideas elucidates the unfolding litany of adoration to Apollo. This process is evident from the cumulative nature of the structure (see Table 1) which is highly elaborate. Sullivan begins with a tripartite section ('Lord of the golden day') for male chorus in D major, which, with its 9/8 triple compound metre, recalls the rhetoric of the Rhine in *Das Rheingold* (Example 1), the 'dazzling' sun retaining a parallel with Wagner's glistening gold. In contradistinction to this radiant mood is a more animated secondary thematic departure in G minor ('Thou mountest heaven's blue steep'), clearly intended to evoke the waking world, the encamped armies and dormant cities. This is appropriately tonally more exploratory, but is resolved by a truncated reprise of the opening thematic material. A third thematic idea - a panegyric hymn ('Thou the dead hero's name') - is introduced though this is ultimately a thematic 'prefix' to what is in essence a 'cabaletta' operatic theme (Theme 4) and the goal of this entire section (Example 2).



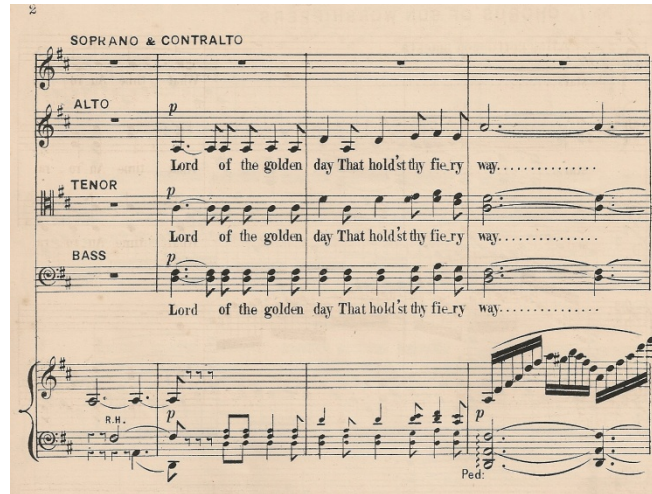
Example 1: The 'Rhine' gold accompanimental material to the opening of Scene 1, *The Martyr of Antioch*.



Example 2: The 'cabaletta' theme (Theme 4), *The Martyr of Antioch*.

The predominance of the sound of the male chorus is then contrasted by the entrance of Julia whose pastoral aria ('The love-sick damsel') makes allusion to Margarita's love for Olybius. This short solo paragraph functions as a brief interlude before the chorus returns with a further addition to the litany ('Lord of the unerring bow'), the rhetoric of which clearly sounds like the beginning of an operatic finale. At this point Sullivan presents a further tripartite design which begins in marshal mood in D minor, again with the male chorus to the fore. A central paragraph, for female chorus ('Lord of the holy spring') parallels the tonal plan of the former ternary structure, but in the subdominant major. In similar fashion, too, the tonal behaviour is fluid and is enhanced by the addition of the tenors and basses. A truncated reprise of the marshal material is then skilfully combined with that of the female chorus (recalling a favoured process from *The Light of the World*) before Sullivan effects his *coup de maitre*. A continuation of the litany now proceeds with a pastoral male chorus in B major ('Lord of the cypress grove') and new thematic idea (Theme 7). This is more richly enunciated by the full chorus before Sullivan deftly re-introduces his first theme ('And still in Daphne's bower'), though still in B major (see Example 3) rather than D. The purpose of this thematic recapitulation lies in the text, for it is the invocation of Apollo ('Great Lycian King appear') that Sullivan reserves for the dramatic return of Theme 3 in full choral apparel in the tonic key ('Phoebus Apollo hear') and, in true operatic fashion, the cabaletta music is restored ('Here to our Syrian home') to lend a sense of 'finale'.





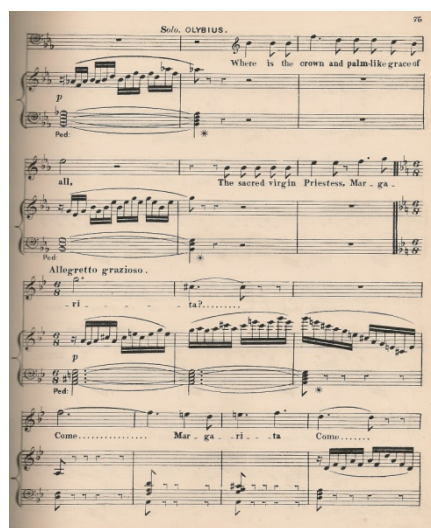
Example 3: Choral opening of Scene 1 (Theme 1), *The Martyr of Antioch*.

Text	Theme	Metre	Key
'Lord of the golden day' (male chorus) [A]	1	9/8	D+
'Thou mountest heaven's blue steep' [B]	2	4/4	G-
'Strik'st music which delays the charmed spheres' [A]	1	9/8	D+
'Thou the dead hero's name' (TTBB)	3	2/2	D+
'In ev'ry sun-lit clime'	4	2/2	D+
'The love-sick damsel laid beneath the myrtle shade' (Julia)	Air	6/8	B flat+
'Lord of the unerring bow' (SATB) [C]	5	6/8	D-
'Lord of the holy spring' (SA) (without male altos) [D]	6	6/8	G+
'The Kings of earth' (SATB) (tonally developmental)			
'Lord of the unerring bow' (SATB) [C]	5/6 combined	6/8	D+
'Lord of the cypress grove' (male chorus and SATB)	7	6/8	B+
'And still in Daphne's bower thou wand'rest many an hour' (SATB)	1	9/8	B+
'Phoebus Apollo hear' (SATB)	3	9/8	D+
'Here to our Syrian home' (SATB)	4	4/4	D+
Coda		4/4	D+

Table 1: Scheme of the opening chorus to Scene 1, *The Martyr of Antioch*.

In response to the hymn, the music then focuses on the first part of the action: a recitative and aria, in which Olybius begs Margarita to attend the sacrifice to Apollo, a short transitional 'duet' for Callias and Olybius (actually a dialogue) in which the latter is exhorted to have no tolerance for the growing Galilean Christian movement, and a short concluding chorus in which the sun-worshippers endorse the Christian scourge. These three components are in fact a tripartite design in themselves, articulating a tonal design established at the beginning of the opening chorus. Olybius's aria (in B flat) constitutes the most substantial part; the ensuing dialogue (embarking from G minor) functions as a transition, and the chorus (which has a distinct melodic similarity to the tune IN MEMORIAM) restores B flat and recalls the bustling accompanimental material from 'Lord of the golden day'.

Of particular merit is Olybius's aria. This reveals a subtle construction and is perhaps symptomatic of Sullivan's intention to be more 'serious' and esoteric in this context (in contrast to the simpler arias of his operettas). It is notable, for example that the aria begins obliquely in D minor, but ultimately forms part of a sequence which cadences in B flat major. This musical entreaty recurs in the form of a refrain throughout the aria, lending the impression of a rondo to this through-composed structure. Moreover, because of its tonally tangential properties, Sullivan uses his refrain as a recovery from two or three episodes which are increasingly exploratory in their tonal behaviour (the first moving to the dominant, the second to the subdominant, the third to the flat mediant (D flat), and for the coda (see Example 4).



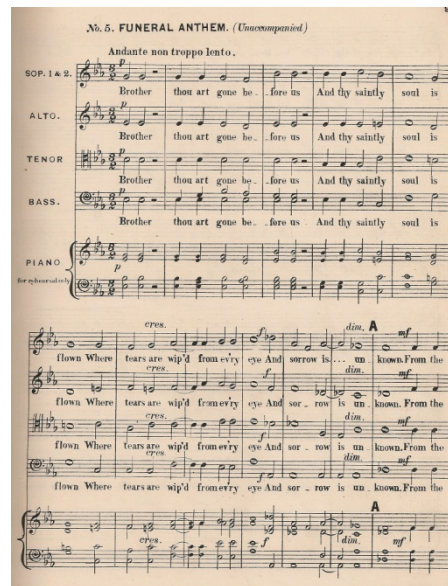
Example 4: The refrain from Olybius's first aria in Scene 1, *The Martyr of Antioch*.

Text	Metre	Key
Introduction (organ)	3/2	E flat+
Funeral anthem 'Brother thou art gone'	3/2	E flat+
Recitative (Fabius) 'Brother, thou slumberest'	4/4	Transitional (to E-)
Recitative ('Yet once again') (Margarita)	4/4	E+
Hymn 'For thou didst die for me' (Margarita)	3/4	C+
Duet 'My own, my loved' (Callias and Margarita)	4/4	G+

Table 2: Scheme of Scene 2, *The Martyr of Antioch*.

With the curse of the Christians at the end of Scene 1, Sullivan's dramatic response in Scene 2 - 'The Burial Place of the Christians - Night' - was to shift the action immediately to a Christian graveyard and to the contemplation of death, its mystery and the promise of resurrection through Christ. This nocturnal scene was deliberate for several reasons: the allegory of evening and the end of life, but Fabius's dramatic warning to his flock to hide themselves had vivid connotations

with Jesus at Gesthemane and the foreboding threat of apprehension by the authorities. The organ introduction, with its hymn-like textures, was very much a romantic evocation of the late third century transformed into nineteenth-century Anglicanism and, with its emotional chromaticism, may well have been a precedent for Stainer's organ prelude to *The Crucifixion* of 1887. However, Sullivan's prelude is important for its allusion to the central theme of the unaccompanied 'Funeral Anthem' (Example 5). This highly-charged, poignant partsong (for that is what it is, having much in common with Sullivan's essays of 1868, including 'The long day closes'), conspicuous for its appearance *without* orchestra (an effective mechanism learned from *The Light of the World*) is masterly for its handling of tonality and construction (see Table 3). Consisting of three stanzas, the first two follow the same scheme, the verse encompassing three main tonal events: the opening in E flat, a rarified divergence to D flat, and a third phase that cadences on V of C. To this is appended a refrain, heard in the organ prelude ('Where the wicked cease from troubling'), which brings the verse back to the tonic. The third verse articulates a new departure which moves to the dominant before shifting further flatwise to G flat major, a tonality that subsequently underpins a further, partial reiteration of the refrain. Sullivan's recovery from this point of tonal 'unearthliness' is resourceful in that it involves a reprise of the third 'event' of the opening material ('May each, like thee, depart in peace'), a process which leaves open the way for a final and full reiteration of the refrain.



Example 5: 'Brother, thou art gone', Scene 2, *The Martyr of Antioch*.

A dramatic juxtaposition to this elegiac atmosphere is Fabius's recitative in which he warns his followers to disperse. Functionally this passage is also one of tonal transition for it paves the way for the introduction of Margarita as the central protagonist. Her recitative is thoroughly reminiscent of Gounod in its lush

Text	Thematic material	Tonality
<b>Stanza 1</b>		
'Brother, thou art gone'	A1	E flat+
'And sorrow is unknown'	A2	D flat+
'From the burden of the flesh'	A3	To V of C
'Where the wicked cease from troubling' (refrain)	B	E flat+
<b>Stanza 2</b>		
'The toilsome way thou'st travelled o'er'	A1	E flat+
'To reach his blest abode'	A2	D flat+
'Thou'rt sleeping now like Lazarus'	A3	To V of C
'Where the wicked cease from troubling' (refrain)	B	E flat+
<b>Stanza 3</b>		
'Earth to earth'	C1	E flat+ (to B flat+)
'But thy spirit brother soars'	C2	G flat+
'Where the wicked cease from troubling'	B	G flat+

(refrain)		
'And when the Lord shall summon us'	D	E flat-
'May each, like thee, depart in peace'	A3	To V of C
'Where the wicked cease from troubling'	B	E flat
(refrain)		

Table 3: Scheme of 'Brother, thou art gone before us', *The Martyr of Antioch*.

orchestration and heart-rending appoggiaturas. Indeed, it is as if Sullivan conceived her tragic role and fate in the same manner as Gounod's Gretchen in *Faust*, though here Margarita's piety fails to be transforming and instead leads to her death. Nevertheless, Sullivan clearly wished to generate as much interest in Margarita's humanity (just as he did with Christ in *The Light of the World*) and this is demonstrable in the emotional world of her recitative and the ensuing 'hymn' ('For thou didst die for me') whose striking modulations underpin her inner conflict of religious devotion and human love.

The final number of Scene 2, the duet between Callias and Margarita, more openly articulates the underlying conflict of Margarita's previous aria, as does the fluctuation between the more settled G-major balletic theme and the striking chromaticism with its inherent tonal instability. Much of this duet is more redolent of a 'scena' in which the recurrences of G-major material represent Callias's more stable, accepted world (or at least the one he hopes for). But, with Margarita's admission that she cannot take part in the sacrifice - and here Sullivan's makes fertile use of declamation rather than arioso - Sullivan takes us far from G to the realms of B major and D flat major, throwing into relief her protestations.

At the beginning of Scene 3 (located 'At the Palace of the Prefect'), with the spectre of tragedy approaching, Sullivan breaks off the action momentarily with an intermezzo in the form of a scherzo, and, though the piece takes the form of a female chorus - the 'Evening Song of the Maidens' - it is surely ballet music in spirit and occurs 'theatrically' at a juncture of heightened drama typical of French opera. The scherzo, as one might expect, is a ternary design with a truncated 'trio'. The quick-silver scoring of this 'Urlicht' miniature, with its 'moto perpetuo' accompaniment for muted strings is exemplary. Its roots look back, undoubtedly, to the models of Mendelssohn and Berlioz's 'Queen Mab', but the language of Sullivan's music here owes more to Gounod, Bizet and Offenbach.

The 'diversion' from the pending catastrophe is, nevertheless, momentary for the rest of Scene 3 is devoted to the meeting of Olybius and Margarita in the Prefect's Palace. At the beginning of Olybius's recitative ('Sweet Margarita, give me thine hand'), Sullivan skilfully turns the brightness of B flat major into something more sinister as he turns to the minor mode. Yet, Olybius, though his character may suffer from a lack of true development, is no stereotypical, dastardly villain. His aria couched in a luxuriant D flat, a melodious, indeed passionate supplication to his beloved, is by no means purely one of egotism, enticement and of worldly materialism, even if these are outwardly evident in the text. It is a genuine love aria and it is surely this complexity that Sullivan wished to explore. Olybius, loyal to his gods and traditions, is just as much torn by the conflict he faces. Yet it falls to Margarita, through the agency of a 'pure' C major (replete with solemn trombones)

to draw him into the new Christian religion (see Table 4). Yet when Olybius curses her faith for having 'wrung the love from [her] pure soul' (an entirely human reaction on the face of it), she spurns him and resigns herself to imprisonment with the sound of Olybius's curse in C minor.

Text	Metre	Key
Chorus: Evening Song of the Maidens 'Come away with willing feet' (SA)	2/4	B flat+
Recitative 'Sweet Margarita, give me thine hand' (Olybius)	4/4	B flat- to V of D flat
Aria: 'See what Olybius' love prepares for thee' (Olybius)	4/4	D flat
Duet Recitative: 'Oh, hear me, Olybius' (Margarita and Olybius)	4/4	D flat to V of C
Duet: 'I ask thine own eternal soul'	4/4	C

Table 4: Scheme of Scene 3, *The Martyr of Antioch*.

The transition from B flat to C in Scene 3 sets up C major as the framing tonality of the final scene, Scene 4. This key has been closely associated with Margarita since her aria of Scene 2 and here Sullivan uses the key with even greater effulgence to accentuate her dramatic centrality. The chorus plays an important part in the opening two numbers. In the first of them, an ABA structure presents the two opposing poles. The 'Heathen Maidens', sung by sopranos and altos (A), have music characterised by a rapid delivery of syllables ('Glory to the god who breaks'); the Christians sung by tenors and basses (B) have a hymn ('Now glory to the God'). These two components deftly combine in the reprise (Example 5).





aria of self-sacrifice which concludes with melodrama and a superbly-judged short but concise chorus (see Table 5).

Text	Metre	Key
Chorus: 'Now glory to the God who breaks' (Heathen Maidens and Christians)	$\frac{3}{4}$	C+
Solo (Julia) and Chorus: 'The maids lift up their hymn around the temple'	$\frac{3}{4}$	C+
Scene: 'Great is Olybius and his mercy great!' (Margarita, Julia, Callias and Chorus)	$\frac{4}{4}$	E flat+
Quartet: 'Have mercy unrelenting heav'n' (Margarita, Julia, Olybius, Callias)	$\frac{3}{4}$	A flat+
Finale: Solo (Margarita) and Chorus: 'The hour of mercy's o'er'	$\frac{4}{4}$	C+

Table 5: Scheme of Scene 4, *The Martyr of Antioch*.

These features of the finale confirm, more than all other elements of the work, that its artistic spirit stemmed from the theatre and not the concert hall. In her initial monologue, Margarita affirms her faith, but her principal focus, given her own position of earthly judgment, is one of the Last Judgment and of all present standing before God's throne. The foreboding nature of this theme gives rise to a structure approaching melodrama (very much in the tradition of Weber, Marschner and Lortzing) in which the forward impetus is compelling in its series of striking modulations and colourful orchestration. Yet Sullivan is careful to retain control over this through-composed form by recalling the lyrical opening material of the monologue at its conclusion, though now with the cryptic forewarning that 'Christ shall render each his own reward'. A second exclamation from the *turba* accentuates Olybius's and Callias's plight: they have no choice but to burn her as a heretic. The

operatic quartet in A flat, reminiscent of Verdi, enshrines the sentiment of mercy among the four characters, each seeking clemency for a different purpose with their individual text.

The conclusion to Scene 4 amounts to some of the most operatic music Sullivan had written by this time in his career. (Burton has suggested that its most likely precedent was the fourth act of Rossini's *Guillaume Tell*,<sup>18</sup> though there are also echoes, albeit fainter, of Elisabeth in *Tannhäuser*.) It being resolved that Margarita should die, Olybius's final interjection (and he had been impressed by Margarita's resolve in her previous monologue) underlines his complexity as a character. At the moment of her sentence he recognises a vision in the face of his beloved, to which Margarita's response - a vision of the celestial - is a transcendental outpouring in C major, recalling the central melody of the work's opening prelude (we have come full circle). This is a powerfully stirring moment in the work in which Sullivan achieves his greatest pathos through the simplest means of diatonic progressions, the directness of a strophic form, affecting modulation (whose affect is heightened by the legerdemain of each return to C major) and a strong, hymn-like idea. This might have been enough to conclude the work, but Sullivan's masterstroke is to give Margarita a closing melodrama in which her transformation is articulated by a tonally fluid coda. Sullivan's use of chromaticism here serves to enhance the climax

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<sup>18</sup> Burton, N., 'Oratorios and Cantatas' in Temperley, N. (ed.), *The Blackwell History of Music in Britain: The Romantic Age 1800-1914* (Basil Blackwell: Oxford, 1988), 229. Here, Young's critical assessment that 'Margarita's 'Hymn of victory at the stake' is ...smug with respectability, and is not calculated to stir sympathy' seem incomprehensible (Young, 218).

of her final departure (accompanied by her top C), one that is affirmed by the succinct choral pæan that follows, bringing down the putative curtain in true operatic fashion.

Text	Theme	Key
'God at whose word the vast creation sprang'	A	E flat+
'And again he comes, again but not as then'	B	G flat+
'Then thou and I shall meet once more'	C	E+
'Thou and I shall then give in the account of this day's process'	A	E flat+

Table 6: Scheme of Margarita's monologue, Scene 4, *The Martyr of Antioch*.

While the *The Martyr of Antioch* may have earned Sullivan a certain approbation at the time, the work never enjoyed the popularity of *The Golden Legend*. Some suggested, and they had a point, that Milman's somewhat intractable words, for all Gilbert's remoulding, were a drawback.<sup>19</sup> However, Milman was a scholar of some substance and while the language of his poem may not have been ideal, the conflicting ideologies, as Young has suggested, 'between the reality of heathendom and the idealism of Christianity' is one that is projected with some skill.<sup>20</sup> It is perhaps true that the characters of the drama required more depth but the length of the work (about 40 minutes) ultimately precluded such treatment. Moreover, as is suggested above, Olybius is by no means one-dimensional nor is Margarita and while the sympathies of the audience may have rested with Margarita's plight,

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<sup>19</sup> *Musical Times*, xxxviii (Jan. 1897), 23.

<sup>20</sup> Young, 218.

Sullivan and Gilbert certainly attempted to attribute some element of mercy and humanity to the other characters. Many of the formal mechanisms of the individual numbers reflect his typical sense of care and artifice, while the rhetorical gestures and musical ideas in the drama are also indisputably operatic in origin, particularly in the final scene. Walker was, of course, damning: 'Apart from a certain amount of a sort of mildly pleasant picturesqueness, [the work] alternates between dullness and vulgarity, and sometimes attains both at once.' One thinks Walker protested too much, and in so doing, revealed his pro-Brahmsian affinities too baldly to be critically objective. As Young, who was by no means uncritical of *The Martyr*, refuted: 'This is not so. *The Martyr of Antioch* lacks the tension of true drama, but its evocation of atmosphere and its delineation of certain aspects of personality are splendidly accomplished.'<sup>21</sup> Even Stanford, who evidently did not particularly admire Sullivan's score, conceded that it was 'picturesque in treatment',<sup>22</sup> and this view was clearly endorsed by the Carl Rosa Opera Company who proceeded to stage the work in 1898<sup>23</sup>. But what both Walker and Young failed to see, was that Sullivan was in the process of developing his own concept of the choral work. This was by no means a simple matter, for, in satisfying the traditional needs of the chorus (who were, after all, the *raison d'être* of the choral festival), he was nevertheless attempting to develop a dramatic aesthetic, instinctive to his own

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<sup>21</sup> Young, 220.

<sup>22</sup> Stanford, C. V. 'Sullivan's *Golden Legend*' in *Studies and Memories* (Archibald Constable & Co. Ltd: London, 1908), 162.

<sup>23</sup> See footnote 25 in chapter two, 54.

creative ideals, but which did not sit easily within the traditional confines of the English town hall. In this sense there is something courageous and rousing - indeed exciting - about *The Martyr* which, as it transpired, he was loath to abandon, for, with a further commission from the Leeds Festival in 1886, he was moved to extend his sense of experiment into yet further new territory, and, as Burton has suggested, 'Sullivan's mind was turning increasingly towards grand opera'.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Burton, N., '100 Years of a Legend', *Musical Times*, cxxvii (Oct 1986), 555.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### *THE GOLDEN LEGEND*

### AND THE GOLDEN BOY OF LEEDS

#### 5.1 Gestation of *The Golden Legend*

When Sullivan came to compose *The Golden Legend* in 1886, he had successfully occupied the position of conductor and director of the Leeds Festival for the third time. Indeed, through his offices, the prestige of Leeds with its voluminous chorus and orchestra had increased nationally and internationally, a fact marked by the visit to the city of Dvořák to direct his cantata *St Ludmila* and the commission of a number of indigenous works by the new up-and-coming talents of Stanford (*The Revenge*), Mackenzie (*The Story of Sayid*) and, of course, Sullivan's own. After the relative success of *The Martyr of Antioch*, the public and press had a heightened expectation of what Sullivan might produce, not least because the composition of his new choral work, hot on the heels of his latest Savoy comic triumph of *The Mikado*, might reveal a further 'serious' side of his undoubted talent.

In fact the committee of Leeds had originally asked Sullivan to write a symphony and the fact that he declined this idea seems to point to the fact that he felt himself incapable of writing a second work in that genre. An interesting fact is

that at about the time of writing *Patience* and *The Martyr of Antioch* in 1881<sup>1</sup>, Sullivan had visited Egypt which 'so impressed him that he had ideas of writing an Egyptian symphony, indeed a statement that he was doing so, appeared in a musical paper in London.'<sup>2</sup> As with a speculated Second Symphony in D, this 'Egyptian' Symphony appears to have been little more than rumour, for neither manuscript nor sketches have ever been found for either project.

Rejecting the idea of an extended instrumental canvas, Sullivan returned to the notion of a choral work. 'I should very much like to do a short choral work, not necessarily sacred, but of an earnest character.'<sup>3</sup> By this Sullivan clearly wished to write a work which possessed a moral dimension.<sup>4</sup> The literary focus for Sullivan on this occasion was Longfellow's popular poem *The Golden Legend*, first published in 1851, but which formed part of a much larger epic collection called *Christus* which became available in 1872. In typical Romantic fashion, Longfellow drew his inspiration from the medieval text of Hartmann von Aue's *Der arme Heinrich*. The text afforded several advantages: there were good possibilities for chorus, imperative to the environment of Leeds, but, more importantly, the narrative, while essentially dramatic in nature, involved a strong polemic of Christian morality in which evil is vanquished by all-conquering love. What drew Sullivan to this literary material is not absolutely clear. Joseph Bennett, Sullivan's librettist, described how,

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<sup>1</sup> It is interesting to note that Sullivan was capable of working on both serious cantata and comic opera simultaneously, which seems to indicate that his methods of working and his thought processes were exactly the same for both genres, as were, for the most part, the musical forms he employed.

<sup>2</sup> Sullivan & Flower 1927, 119.

<sup>3</sup> Baily, L. *The Gilbert and Sullivan Book* (London, 1952), 276.

<sup>4</sup> Burton, N., '100 Years of a Legend', *Musical Times*, cxxvii (Oct. 1986), 554.



as early as 1866 he had received a letter from Sullivan saying that Miss Chappell had suggested Longfellow's *The Golden Legend* for the Leeds Festival and that he and Miss Chappell had tried to select material for a connected work. Unable to complete the libretto to his satisfaction, Longfellow's poem had evidently been laid aside. Two decades later, after feeling he was unable to construct a coherent libretto himself, he asked Bennett, who, by that time, was a seasoned librettist of opera and especially choral works, to complete the task. Sullivan enclosed a book of Longfellow's poems and the book fell open automatically at *The Golden Legend* and according to Bennett the 'poem was adorned with many pencil marks on many pages - it appeared to me on going through the marked passages that Sullivan selected incidents and scenes admirably adapted for musical effect, but having in many cases no relationship to one another'.<sup>5</sup> Bennett's task (which not only included compression of the story but some free inclusion of his own text where needed)<sup>6</sup> seems to have been accomplished very quickly without consulting Sullivan in any way. He recorded that he read it aloud to Sullivan who 'listened without saying a word, but when I came to the end he looked up, his eyes beaming and his cheeks flushed, remarking "you have saved me Jo"''.<sup>7</sup>

It has also been suggested, however, that the renewal of his acquaintance with Liszt in 1886 – not long before he began work on his Leeds commission – may have

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<sup>5</sup> Bennett, J., *Forty Years of Music* (Methuen: London, 1908), 80.

<sup>6</sup> Burton, N., '100 Years of a Legend', *Musical Times*, cxxvii (Oct 1986), 556.

<sup>7</sup> Bennett 1908, 81

been a significant catalyst to the return of his attention to Longfellow's poem.<sup>8</sup> Liszt had been invited to London by one of his old pupils and advocates, Walter Bache, in April 1886, to commemorate his 75<sup>th</sup> birthday and to attend various events in his honour. Among the array of London's musical establishment invited to meet him was Sullivan who had been at Leipzig with Bache (and other Liszt admirers such as Edward Dannreuther) in the 1860s. He had not seen the great Hungarian pianist and composer since his student days at Leipzig but was delighted not only to meet his old acquaintance but escort him to all the arranged events organised for him. This included two performance of his oratorio *St Elisabeth* under Mackenzie at the St James's Hall and Crystal Palace, a reception at the Grosvenor Gallery, a reception with Queen Victoria and the establishment of a Liszt piano scholarship at the Royal Academy of Music.

The suggestion that Liszt might have been a key influence on the selection of Longfellow's poem has been largely predicated on this fraternisation between Sullivan and Liszt and on the fact Liszt had already set a portion of the text in his work *Die Glocken des Strassburger Münsters* in 1874, the very text moreover that Sullivan used in the Prologue to his own choral work. There is a certain plausibility to this argument which has been supported furthermore by Sullivan's adoption of a more advanced chromatic harmonic language (albeit more conservatively redolent

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<sup>8</sup> See Silverman, Richard S., 'Longfellow, Liszt and Sullivan', *The Musical Review*, xxxvi (1975), reproduced in *Deutsche Sullivan Gesellschaft*, <http://www.sullivan-forschung.de/html/f1-analysen-longfellow.html> accessed 21 July 2015; see also Burton, N., '100 Years of a Legend', *Musical Times*, cxxvii (Oct. 1986), 555. Young has even suggested that a setting of *The Golden Legend* by his former American fellow student at Leipzig, Dudley Buck, may have been a stimulus (Young, 221).

of Schumann's vocabulary rather than Wagner) and richer orchestral palette (including a cor anglais and contrabassoon).<sup>9</sup> Added to which, Sullivan began work on *The Golden Legend* shortly after Liszt's brief visit to London and it is tempting to draw the conclusion that contact with Liszt and his oratorio *St Elisabeth* had a decisive influence before he put pen to paper. While Liszt's influence cannot be ruled out, Sullivan's contact with a great deal of other music needs also to be considered.

The story of *The Golden Legend*, heavily adapted by Sullivan's librettist Joseph Bennett, tells of Prince Henry of Hoheneck at his castle of Voutsberg on the Rhine, sick from an incurable disease.<sup>10</sup> (Portrayed as an heroic tenor, it is not actually until well into the drama that the Prince shows his true courage.) Having consulted the famous doctors of Solerno, he has learned that he can only be cured by the blood of a maiden who would be willing to die for him and willing to die, moreover, of her own free will. Thinking this remedy is impossible, the Prince gives way to despair and it is at this point that he is visited by Lucifer (a demonic bass), disguised as a travelling physician. The devil tempts Prince Henry with alcohol and, once he manages to get the Prince inebriated, he forces him out of his castle as an outcast. Prince Henry finds shelter in the cottage of one of his subjects and the daughter of the house, Elsie (a true, innocent soprano heroine), feels great compassion for the Prince and decides to die for him so that he can be restored to health. Ursula, her

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<sup>9</sup> Young makes a case for the Lisztian influence in *Sir Arthur Sullivan* (J. M. Dent: London, 1971), 224.

<sup>10</sup> Burton likens Prince Henry, somewhat unkindly, as a poor man's Amfortas' (Burton 1986, 555), suggesting that, although Sullivan disliked *Parsifal* (see Baily, 265), Wagner's last music drama still left a residue of influence.

mother (a mezzo soprano), tries to persuade her not to do this, but Elsie has made up her mind. Prince Henry, Elsie and the servants set out for Salerno (famous in the Middle Ages for its Schola Medica Salernitana, the world's first medical school and well known for its promulgation of Arabic medical treatises). On arriving at their destination, Prince Henry and Elsie are received by Lucifer who has assumed the role of Friar Angelo, a doctor at the medical school. Elsie says that she is willing to lay down her life despite the opposition of Henry who tells her that he only intended to test her loyalty to him and that he had no intention of letting her go through with her proposed plan. Lucifer takes Elsie into an inner chamber in order to kill her, thereby attempting to thwart her redemptive intentions, but the Prince and his servants manage to break down the door and rescue her. Miraculously healed (apparently because of his own heroic gesture), Prince Henry marries Elsie and is restored to his rightful place as Prince.

Burton perceived the appeal of this subject matter as symptomatic of 'one of the two authentic national religious traditions,'<sup>11</sup> and more specifically that High Church Anglo-Catholic tradition of Ecclesiology which had embraced and revived 'old' music and particularly the structures of old counterpoint and plainchant. In addition, 'its high-church counterpart had been assiduously fostered by the Oxford movement' but also 'emphasized the subjective mysticism inherent in Arminian Anglicanism and Roman Catholicism' in which connections with more European

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<sup>11</sup> Burton, N., 'Oratorios and Cantatas' in Temperley, N. (ed.), *The Blackwell History of Music in Britain: 1800-1914* (Basil Blackwell: Oxford, 1988), 229.

works such as Gounod's *Mors et Vita* and George Henschel's *Stabat Mater* were perceivable.<sup>12</sup> Yet, the presence of numerous typical nineteenth-century dramatic archetypes in this narrative - the hopeless figure of Prince Henry, the destructive Lucifer and the pure, redemptive soul of Elsie - surely also suggests that Sullivan was looking for a dramatic subject on a par with those of Berlioz, Schumann, Wagner and Offenbach. The examples of Schumann's *Scenes from Goethe's Faust* and Berlioz's *La Damnation de Faust* were undoubtedly known to Sullivan (notably the latter which was still widely performed), the former a secular oratorio, the latter a hybrid work which could be performed as an oratorio or staged as an opera. The Faust legend has much in common with Longfellow's adaptation of *Der arme Heinrich* with its despairing central character, the gnawing presence of Mephistopheles and the noble innocence of Gretchen. There were important operatic precedents as well. Gounod's opera *Faust* was well known to Sullivan and a frequent production on London operatic stages, and he was also *au fait* with the scores of Wagner's *Der fliegende Holländer* and *Tannhäuser* with their various admixtures of despondent main characters and redemptive heroines. We should also not discount Liszt's symphonic masterpiece *A Faust Symphony*, a triptych of symphonic poems based on the three central characters, and perhaps we cannot also discard the possibility that Sullivan was familiar with Offenbach's final masterpiece *Les contes d'Hoffmann*, first given in Paris in 1881, whose 'triptych' plot similarly deploys the devilish characters of Lindorf, Dr Coppélius, Dr Miracle and Dappertutto, the

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

doomed figure of Hoffmann (who renounces love) and several tragic female lovers<sup>13</sup>. Last but not least, one suspects also that Sullivan was searching for a dramatic subject that would, as a 'dramatic cantata', effectively give the impression of an opera-*manquée* in which the drama and narrative would be seamless. This is certainly evident from the rich panoply of 'mis-en-scènes' descriptions to each scene and the implicit 'stage directions' and costume descriptions which appear throughout. What is more, to reinforce the sense of a hybridisation (much like that of *La Damnation de Faust*) in which one feels torn between the concert hall and the opera house, Sullivan saw the possibility of many typically Gothic agencies of later nineteenth-century Romantic opera in the use of bells (as at the beginning),<sup>14</sup> synthetic plainchant and hymns to give a sense of 'authenticity' to the drama (just as Berlioz, Meyerbeer and Wagner had done). In addition, Sullivan knew that Leeds would afford him the

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<sup>13</sup> Sullivan would certainly have come across the version of the Faust legend as dealt with by W.S. Gilbert in his straight play *Gretchen* first produced at the Olympic Theatre, London, on March 24<sup>th</sup> 1879. Like Sullivan, Gilbert could also write serious works at the same time as creating comic operas and *Gretchen* was conceived just after *HMS Pinafore* and just before *The Pirates of Penzance*.

<sup>14</sup> The idea of including the bells in the score appears to have been at the suggestion of Joseph Bennett himself - the original manuscript does not have them - they are written in the fly leaf in effect acting as an extra bar- which has been written in by hand in the manuscript which has been bound in red leather sometime after being left in the composer's will to the Royal College of Music. The bells form an important part of the cantata as it exists and have an important history. On the same day he took the final sections of the manuscript to Novello's, Sullivan commissioned a peal of four bells from Lund and Blackley, of London which cost him £100. They were cast by John Warner and Sons of Spitalfields and matched the chimes of Strasbourg Cathedral bells - G flat, A flat, B flat and C flat. By all accounts the set of bells weighed 12 hundredweight and were hung during performances at the back of the orchestra. At the premiere, during the Prologue, they were struck with a single wooden mallet. In the last scene, when the bells were meant to be heard in the evening from a distance across open country, the player apparently put a pair of boxing gloves on and punched the bell with both hands. A set of tubular bells made by John Hampton of Coventry (who also provided a set for the Bayreuth performance of *Parsifal*) were also used. Both sets, however, tuned to the high pitch of the Leeds town hall organ were excellent for that building, but were not suitable for performances at many other venues, especially when an organ was used. Sullivan, always the business man (and someone who had insisted on his horse manure being sold) later hired the bells out at a charge of £5 together with the score and band parts from Novello for performances of the cantata. What happened to the bells and their present whereabouts is unknown.

possibility of a large orchestra (with additional woodwind and brass) and this presented an opportunity to show his powers of orchestration beyond those he had normally presented in his operettas and concert overtures, as well as the chance to use the orchestra in new creative situations. As Mackenzie, who remained a lifelong champion of *The Golden Legend*, remarked:

In Longfellow's *The Golden Legend*, a subject was hit upon containing exactly that human touch which so well fitted the genius he has undoubtedly exhibited in its treatment. From the elaborate, vivid and exciting prologue, painted in the strongest colours of modern instrumentation, to the touching finale, which brings tears to the eyes (as I confess it did to mine in the first performance) the composer has availed himself in a masterly manner of all the resources at the musician's command, and the gathered experience of a lifetime.<sup>15</sup>

With regard to Sullivan's instrumentation, there has been some suggestion that Hamilton Clark, who made many orchestrations of Sullivan's works, was in some way responsible for the scoring of *The Golden Legend*. In his work on Parry, Dibble quotes a letter from Jaeger to Parry which seems to confirm this: 'Jaeger pleaded with him [Parry] to farm out some of the orchestration. "You are too conscientious over your scoring, Jaeger insisted." "Why Sullivan's "Golden Legend" was largely scored by Hamilton Clark, as we know very well here! No one thought the worse of Sullivan for that! And he wasn't as busy as you are!"<sup>16</sup> Clark did indeed make arrangements and selections and even scored some of the opera overtures for Sullivan,<sup>17</sup> but there is simply no evidence of his work in *The Golden Legend*.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Findon 1904, 84.

<sup>16</sup> Dibble, J. C., *Hubert H. Parry: His Life and Music* (Clarendon Press: Oxford 1992; repr. 2002), 396.

<sup>17</sup> Hamilton Clarke was responsible for the overtures to *The Mikado*, *Ruddigore* (in the 1887 version) and *The Sorcerer* (in the 1884 revival). Alfred Cellier arranged the overtures to *HMS Pinafore* and *The Pirates of Penzance* and Eugene d'Albert also scored and arranged the overture to *Patience*, working, like Hamilton

Moreover, Sullivan himself appears to contradict this idea by the fact that there are entries in his diary, written at the time of writing *The Golden Legend* which give the reader an interesting insight into the composer's method of working, as well as the events of the final work on the cantata:

August 10 - finished 3<sup>rd</sup> Scene.

August 11 Began 4<sup>th</sup> scene 9 composition.

August 13 - Gave Baird scores of Prologue and 1,2 and 3 scenes to get on with.

August 14 - finished frame of 4<sup>th</sup> scene.

August 15 - framed choral and Epilogue.

August 16 - Scoring Epilogue.

August 17 - Finished scoring Epilogue.<sup>19</sup>

George Baird and his son, referred to in the diary, were Sullivan's copyists all his life. The fact that he refers to scoring, that is to say orchestrating, would imply that in the case of *The Golden Legend* Hamilton Clark had nothing to do with the orchestration at any point. The copying done by Baird would, of course, have been the copying and preparing of orchestral parts from the full score which was written as a manuscript by Sullivan himself.

## 5.2 Structure and Form

### 5.2.1 Prologue

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Clarke and Cellier from Sullivan's sketches and outlines. Neither Clarke nor d'Albert nor Cellier were responsible for any of the actual musical creativity, nor even for the originality of the orchestration, which was all detailed by Sullivan. All the other opera overtures were entirely the hand of Sullivan and none of the Clarke, Cellier, d'Albert trio were involved with the arranging and orchestration involved with the choral works.

<sup>18</sup> Moreover, an inspection of the autograph manuscript score of the work clearly illustrates that there is no evidence of any hand other than Sullivan's own having written neither the orchestration nor any other part of the work. The autograph manuscripts of *The Light of the World* and *The Martyr of Antioch* are also entirely in Sullivan's own hand confirming that his creations were entirely his own, with only the vocal scores and piano reductions being prepared from the manuscripts by Eugene d'Albert and others.

<sup>19</sup> Sullivan Diary for 1886, Pierpont Morgan Library.

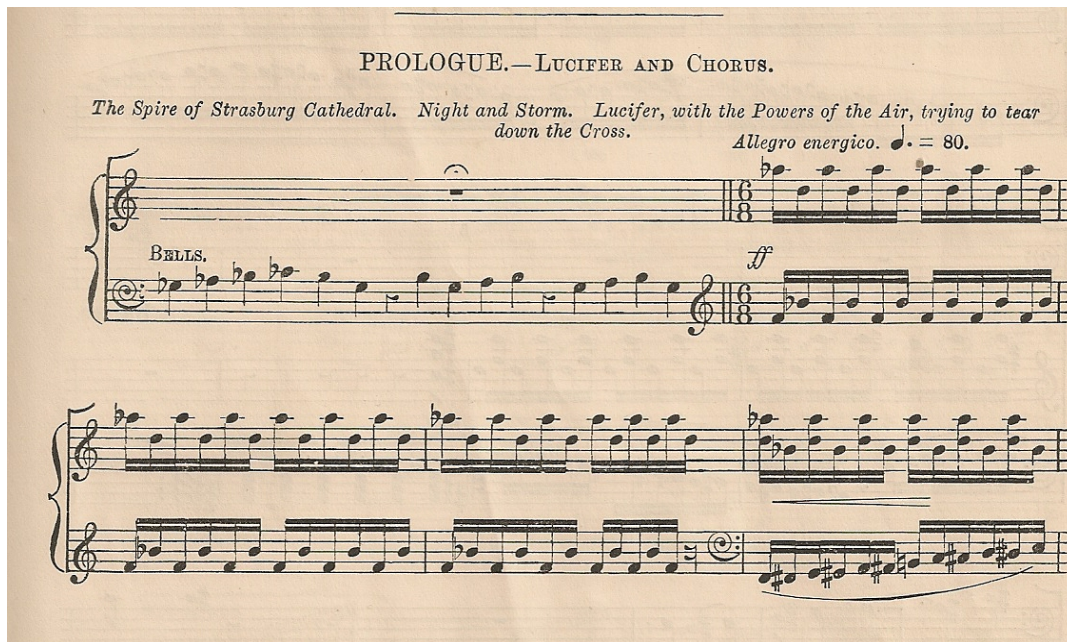


The Prologue presents an unambiguous example of this newly-found form of Romantic expression in Sullivan's armoury. Lucifer, with the Powers of the Air, try to tear down the cross from Strassburg Cathedral during a stormy night. The scene is ushered in with the chimes of bells (from the cathedral tower) which are transformed into 'quasi-plainsong' by the tenors and basses replete with Latin rhymes ('Laudo Deum verum!'), clearly (though not explicitly) playing the part of monks. And, as Lucifer and his entourage are vanquished (a spectre of the cantata's outcome), the tenors and basses sing the coda accompanied (as would have been a nineteenth-century practice) by the organ in the Gregorian chant (as described by Sullivan in the score, though again this is synthetic and more in the manner of a Victorian transformation) for Nocturns 'Nocte surgentes vigilemus omnes' ('Now the night is over'), one of the eight Benedictine hymns assigned to St Gregory.<sup>20</sup>

To these elements Sullivan appends a creative thematic and tonal through-composed structure. Because of the fixed pitches of the bells around G flat/F#, the litany-like form always comes back to F# major with the plainchant of the monks (see Table 1). However, with each invocation from Lucifer, the orchestral material and his declamation are tonally indeterminate by means of Sullivan's attitudinising use of ascending semitonal sequences of seventh harmonies (Example 1a).

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<sup>20</sup> See 'Nocte surgentes vigilemus omnes' in Julian, J. (ed.), *Dictionary of Hymnology* (John Murray: London, 1892), 809; see also Watson, J. & Hornby, E., 'Nocte surgentes vigilemus omnes' in *The Canterbury Dictionary of Hymnology* (Canterbury Press, 2013).



Example 1a: Opening of the Prologue

In answer to these invocations, the Chorus of Spirits, who fail to carry out Lucifer's commands, enter each time with their rejoinder (e.g. 'O we cannot' - see Example 1b).

VOICES.  
1st & 2nd Soprano. ALTO.

O we can not

*f* *leggiere.*

*dim.*

Example 1b: Female Chorus of Spirits ('O we cannot!')

The first three of these responses, which are ultimately pulled back to the stability of F# by the chorus of monks (Example 1c) - a role accentuated when Lucifer, the Spirits and the Chorus of Monks sing together in ensemble - are organised in a system of descending semitones, the first beginning on G, the second on F# and the third on F,

before the last and most urgent embarks from G#. The Prologue then concludes with the same storm music as the opening, though this time depicting its subsidence to a diminished seventh on B. Lucifer's material, though it is by design tonally 'amorphous', it too reveals this semitonal attitudinising in that Lucifer's continued invocations showing a tendency to fall semitonally (cf. the first two invocations which begin respectively on C# (Example 1d) and C - and the last ('Baffled, baffled') on B); moreover, much of the inner tonal detail shows a tendency for tonalities 'related' by semitonal movement (e.g. 'Shake the casements' which embarks from C#, moves to D and then up to E flat).

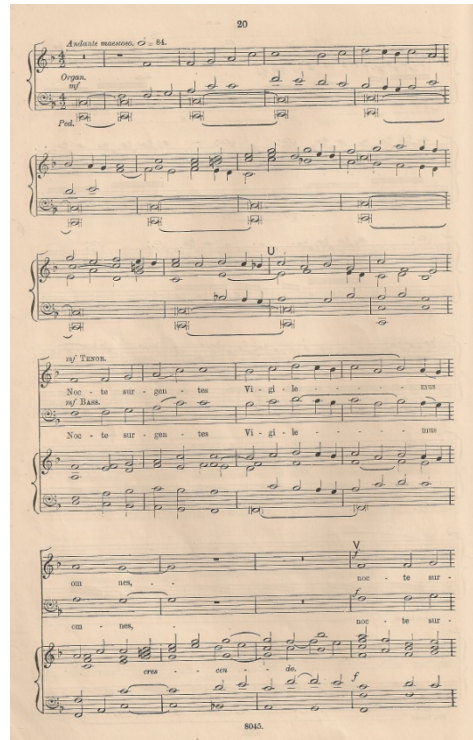
The image shows a musical score for a chorus of monks. It features three staves: Tenor (Tenor.), Bass (Bass.), and The Bells (The Bells.). The music is in 6/8 time and G major. The lyrics are: 'Lau - do De - um ve - rum! Ple - bem vo - co! Con - gre - go cle - rum!'. The score includes dynamic markings such as *mf* and *f*, and articulation marks like accents (^). The bottom of the page is marked with a 'D'.

Example 1c: Chorus of Monks ('Laudo Deum verum!')



Example 1d: Lucifer's first passage of declamation ('Hasten, hasten! o ye spirits!')

Within the context of the broader domain of F#, the ending of the storm is inconclusive, but in relation to the coda, it functions as a substitute dominant of F, a tonality which, a *semitone* away from F#, continues to emphasise Sullivan's systematic tonal thinking. Moreover, the F major of the quasi-plainchant hymn (Example 1e) that follows, is transparently diatonic in marked contrast to the Berliozian chromaticism of the storm music and is thereby thrown into relief by its 'non-semitonal' properties. Both tonalities - F# and F - will also figure significantly within the larger fabric of Sullivan's dramatic scheme.



Example 1e: Conclusion (coda) with Chorus of Monks

Text	Key	Comments
Bell Chimes	F#	
Orchestral prelude		Tonally indeterminate; ascending sequence of sevenths
'Hasten, hasten!' (Lucifer)		Dim. 7 <sup>th</sup>
'O we cannot' (female chorus)	F#	Begins on G; concludes on F#
'Laudo Deum verum!' (male chorus)	F#	With bells
Orchestral reprise		Tonally indeterminate; sequence of diminished sevenths
'Lower! Lower!' (Lucifer)		Dim. 7 <sup>th</sup> (concludes down a semitone)
'All thy thunders' (female chorus)	F#	Begins and concludes in F#
'Defunctos ploro' (male chorus)	F#	With bells
'Shake the casement' (Lucifer)		Tonally fluid
'O we cannot' (female chorus)	F#	Begins on F; concludes in F#
'Funera plango' (male chorus)	F#	
Lucifer, female and male choruses	F#	Ensemble; female chorus begin more urgently in G# major but are pulled back by the F# of the monks' chant
Closing section: Lucifer and female chorus	D/E flat	Tonally indeterminate; return of seventh sequences
Orchestral postlude with bell chimes	F#	Concludes with diminished



		seventh on B (substitute V leading to dominant of F)
Coda: 'Nocte surgentes'	F	Synthetic plainchant with organ

Table 1: Structure of Prologue, *The Golden Legend*

### 5.2.2 Scenes 1-3

The final scene of *The Martyr of Antioch* - Margarita's heroic immolation - gave some strong indication with continuous scena structure - that Sullivan's methods were advancing. Indeed, by the time he conceived the design of *The Golden Legend*, he had moved on considerably in his conception of individual scenes and set pieces. Gone were the more conservatively delineated 'scena ed aria' devices of Italian opera that inhabited many of the earlier choral works, and while the set piece still remained, it became a much more integrated, seamless part of a larger *composite* structure in which a matrix of representative themes and tonal associations played a more significant role,<sup>21</sup> and where the orchestra's function assumed a much more important illustrative and colourful ingredient to the drama as well as the musical fabric.

Scene 1, which depicts the despairing Prince Henry, the appearance of Lucifer and the Prince's imbibing of Lucifer's pernicious alcoholic potion, demonstrates this new-found method in three connected sections. The first gesture, an illustration of the Prince's restlessness and insidious illness - it is midnight and he is prevented

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<sup>21</sup> Sullivan's themes have been described as 'leitmotifs', but their symphonic development, while evident in some instances, bears little resemblance to the concept of symphonic instrumental counterpoint quintessential to Wagner's techniques in his later music dramas. In this regard they are more reminiscent of Schumann in *Genoveva* or Verdi's use of representative themes in his later operas such as *Aida* and *Don Carlos*.

from sleeping - is conveyed by no less than 57 bars of orchestral prelude (Example 2):

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SCENE I.—PRINCE HENRY, LUCIFER, AND CHORUS (SOPRANOS AND ALTOS).

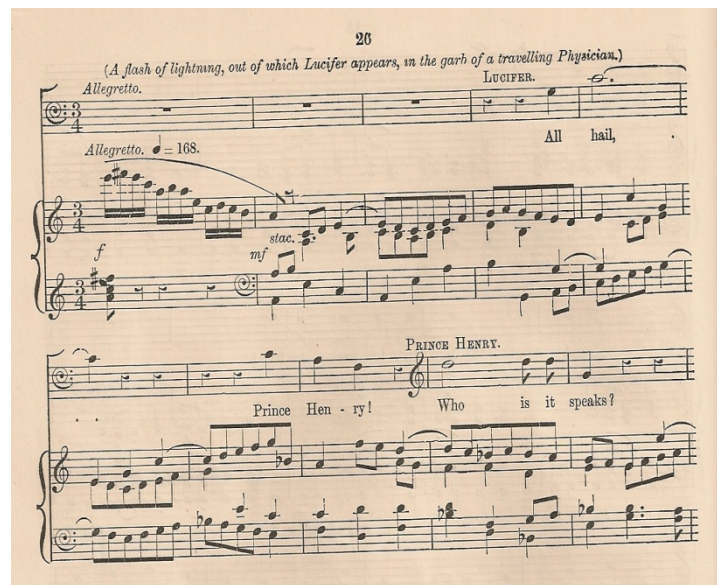
*The Castle of Vautsburg on the Rhine. A chamber in a tower. Prince Henry sitting alone, ill, and restless. Midnight.*

*Allegro. ♩ = 152.*

Example 2: Prince Henry's 'despair', Scene 1

This turbulent music is like nothing else in either his operatic music or choral music so far composed, and is much more reminiscent of Romantic opera in Schumann, Marrschner, Lortzing and, to some extent, those canvases of Wagner's earlier period of the late 1840s and early 1850s such as *Rienzi*, *Der fliegende Holländer* and *Tannhäuser*. After the tonally oblique opening, the music restively subsides to A minor, an important tonality we will soon hear associated with Lucifer. Prince

Henry's first vocal appearance, in which he pleads for rest and peace, attempts to establish C major with which he will be closely linked. This passage, however, is no more than an interlude to the entrance (in a flash of lightning, brilliantly portrayed by the orchestra) of Lucifer, reinstating the importance of A minor (Example 3).



Example 3: Lucifer's appearance and representative theme, Scene 1

The nature of Lucifer's theme is indicative of the changing concept of Sullivan's vocal technique. Lucifer's declamatory material (and that of Prince Henry who responds) is subordinate to the studied counterpoint of the woodwind ensemble which accompanies it. The contrapuntal nature of the idea is a clever one, for it suggests an artful, calculating evil, all the more pronounced in its malevolence through the 'steely' classicism of the wind instrumentation. Lucifer's theme provides the framework for the central episode of Scene 1, though within it Sullivan found room to introduce a representative theme for 'the blood that flows from a maiden's veins' (Example 4):



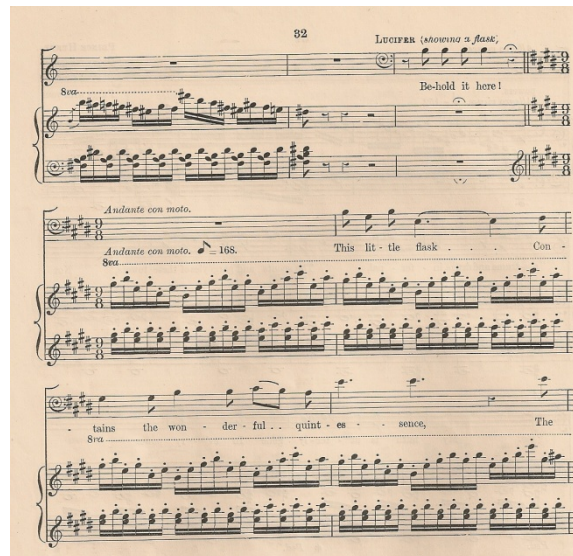


Example 4: The 'maiden's blood' theme (orchestra), Scene 1

As an appendage to Lucifer's episode, the rest of Scene 1 is framed in Prince Henry's key, C major (pp. 31-43 of the vocal score). Here the fact that Sullivan's technique moves on from the melodrama of his former choral works into something more akin to the declamation of early Wagner is palpable.<sup>22</sup> The role of the orchestra as the all-important driving force is vital, both to give the drama its momentum and coherence but also as an illustrative agent in the 9/8 section in which Lucifer presents the Prince with the flask of alluring alcohol. The beguiling atmosphere of this section, in which Lucifer's takes his first whiff of victory, is also created by the embarkation from E

<sup>22</sup> Sullivan considered the notion of traditional recitative quite unsuited to English speech and tradition and, in his early editing of Mozart's operas, he printed the unaccompanied recitatives as spoken dialogue and placed the music as supplements at the end of each of the scores. In Boosey's Royal edition he was sole editor of *Don Giovanni* and joint editor (with Josiah Pittman) of *The Magic Flute* and *The Marriage of Figaro*.

major (though this tonality is purely *en passant* - Example 5) and the gossamer orchestration in which it is cloaked:



Example 5: 'Lucifer's potion', Scene 1

E major, however, yields to C as the Prince, accompanied by the supplicant warnings of the Chorus of Angels, drinks the potion and is given to 'golden visions' in a rhapsodic, through-composed coda in which the quasi-improvisation of the material lends itself to the Prince's listless condition.

Scene 2 is framed by a nocturnal pastoral in F major which connects it tonally directly with the coda of the Prologue. Sullivan had originally intended the opening part of the scene ('Slowly, slowly') to be choral, but his inclination (as with so much of the work) was for a soloist:

Dear Jo,

When are you in town - or are you far away? I have all but done the immortal work. I have worried my head out over it - I am writing for one thing. I can't make a chorus out of 'Slowly slowly' (commencement of 2<sup>nd</sup> scene). Can't I make it a solo for a woman? Ursula hasn't much to do - why not give it to her? If you are in town why not run down here for a breath of air? There are only two or three people with me -

we are very quiet. I write all day, and the others lounge about the gardens and park. Say when you will come and I will send to meet you, as I am some distance from the station. Mind I distinctly offer you no amusement! As I haven't got any. But there are lovely walks and drives.

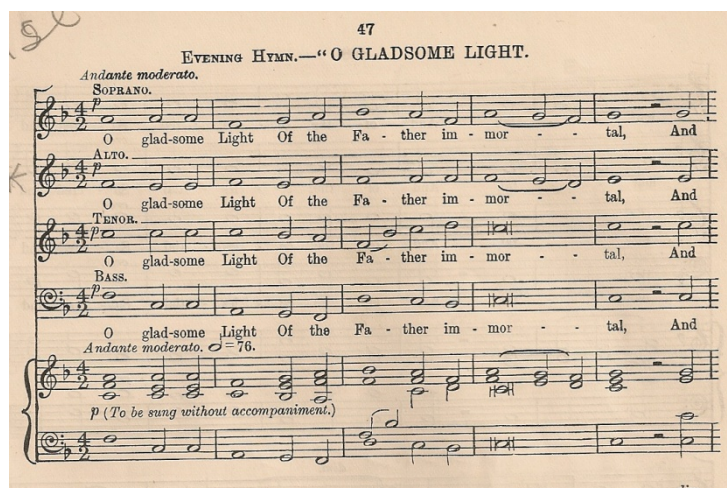
Yours ever.

AS<sup>23</sup>

In the end, though Bennett had counselled for more chorus in Scene 2, Ursula's opening aria went ahead without any, but compensated in its imaginative use of the orchestra. Throughout the aria the orchestra provides 37 bars of preludial material and an additional 12 postludial bars to which, at its core, 34 are essentially vocal and which develop the musical ideas already established in the prelude. To this nocturnal picture is appended the 'Evening Hymn', a setting of 'O gladsome Light of the Father immortal', the ancient Christian hymn known as 'Phos Hilaron' (or in Latin 'Lumen Hilare'). Here Burton's allusion to the High Anglican tradition is an apt one (see above) for Sullivan unequivocally shows his High Anglican colours in selecting a hymn text typical of

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<sup>23</sup> Letter in Sullivan Collection, Pierpont Library, New York.



### Example 6: Opening of 'Evening Hymn', Scene 2

those Tractarian scholars such as John Keble (who translated the text as 'Hail, gladdening light') and J. M. Neale who published many translations of hymn texts derived from the writings of the 'Early Fathers' of the church. Indeed, the opening progressions (I - IIIb - Ib) have much in common with another evening hymn, W. H. Monk's *EVENTIDE* (cf. I - IIIb - vi), well known through its association with Henry Francis Lyte's words as promulgated by *Hymns Ancient & Modern*. The 'sacred' ambience of the dramatic situation is enhanced by the unaccompanied choral delivery, though, of course, Sullivan was falling back on those former contexts of *The Light of the World* and *The Martyr of Antioch* (in particular 'Brother, thou art gone before us') where the effect of unaccompanied singing had served him well. Sullivan's allusion to the genre of the hymn is subtle, for the repetition of the first thirteen bars gives the impression of a second 'verse'. Yet, in reality this 'hymn' is, on closer scrutiny, a through-composed partsong (Table 2).

Text	Key	Comments
'O gladsome light' (bb. 1-13)	F	'Verse 1' but concludes on V
Repetition of bb. 1-13	F	Impression of second verse
'Now to the sunset'	C	Move to the dominant
'We bless thee'	C	Affirmation of C major
'Father Omnipotent'	F	Return to F major
'Now to the sunset'	F	Coda

Table 2: Through-composed structure of 'Evening Hymn', Scene 2

After the set piece of the 'Evening Hymn', Sullivan embarks on an extended dialogue between Ursula and Elsie in which the orchestra acts to cement the shifting moods and tempi. With Elsie's resolve to sacrifice herself, the theme of the 'maiden's blood' returns (p. 52). The reality of her decision naturally unleashes an episode of angst in which the thematic idea symphonically imbues the orchestral material (see pp. 54-5). All the time Sullivan skilfully holds the tonality of F major in the background while allowing a range of keys to colour the turbulent foreground. Perhaps most telling here is the allusion to G flat major (p. 55) which underpins her selfless gesture ('for his sake I will myself the offr'ing make') and the reference to A minor at the end of the first phase of dialogue (p. 56) clearly insinuates the malice of Lucifer. The arioso for Ursula that follows ('Ah, woe is me!'), which obliquely embarks from A minor but is in fact F major, is eloquently juxtaposed with Elsie's serene rejoinder *in* F# major ('Thou wilt not see it'), a passage which Sullivan will make significant dramatic use of later in the cantata (Example 7). The reference to the sanctity of this tonality and its semitonal 'elevation' from F major is a stylishly

executed gesture by the composer as is Elsie's *Lohengrin*-like declamation that ensues in closely-related D flat ('I heard him call'), a gesture which vividly recalls Margarita's affirmation of faith in *The Martyr of Antioch*. To close the scene, Sullivan re-establishes the pastoral mood of F major in a closing 'prayer' aria for Elsie ('If my feeble prayer can reach Thee' - p. 64), one which is suitably prefaced by a duet with a bucolic cor anglais. Her deeply emotional aria, conspicuous by its transparent diatonicism and euphonious Bachian counterpoint, not only receives the benediction of the Chorus of Angels (with allusions to the 'Dresden Amen'?) but is overheard by the belated entry of Prince Henry. The scene concludes with Prince Henry and Elsie 'pass[ing]' slowly into the house', a 'stage' action which is depicted by an orchestral postlude of 30 bars symbolically featuring the melancholy timbre of the cor anglais.

For Scene 3, in which Lucifer reappears, Sullivan returned symbolically to A minor. To depict the atmosphere - Elsie and the Prince are on their way to Salerno (in south-western Italy) - the flavour of the first dialogue ('Onward and onward the highway runs') is distinctly Italian with its 'Saltarello' dance rhythm, the popular Italian style of melody and the typically Italian duet ('Sweet is the air') in parallel sixths which switches to the tonic major. This material sets up one important constituent part of the scene's material on which Sullivan skilfully builds. Appended to the opening section is a transition to G flat major (recalling the Prologue) in which



Example 7: 'Elsie's serenity', Scene 2

distant pilgrims arrive singing the 'Hymn of St Hildebert', another piece of synthetic plainsong,<sup>24</sup> though there are intimations (perhaps deliberate) from time to time within Sullivan's melody of 'Christe redemptor omnium'. At first only two strains of 'plainchant' is heard as the band of pilgrims become more visible, but with the crystallisation of G flat the entire 'chant' is heard. This presentation gives rise to an impressive paragraph in which 'ancient and modern' intermingle, the plainchant melody with its measured notes giving the impression of a *cantus firmus* or old chorale. While the plainchant provides a constant backdrop, Lucifer makes his entry disguised as a friar. At first, his entry is a subtle one. Shades of the initial saltarello

<sup>24</sup> Hilbebert of Lavardin was Bishop of Le Mans, Archbishop of Tours and celebrated medieval writer of hymns during the twelfth century. 'Me receptet Sion illa' became popular as a hymn text in translation.

yield to a 'chorale prelude' texture, the monks with their chant, Lucifer with interjecting counterpoint, but as he plots his evil intention the accompanimental texture and instrumentation transform into a wild 'Baccanale' which allows him to parody the underlying chant in a facetious refrain ('their wonderful piff and paff'). The drama of this episode lies in the coincidence of Lucifer's outburst and the zenith of the pilgrims' passage 'on stage', but as they pass, so too does Lucifer as he cynically rejoins the chant and G flat is restored (Example 8).

82

M

fierce - ly, and wild, . . and strong ! Urbs cœ - les - - tis,

Urbs cœ - les - - - tis,

M

3 3 3 3 f 8ves

urbs be - - a - ta, Su - pra pe - - tram

urbs be - - a - ta, Su - pra pe - - tram

8ves

Example 8: Conclusion of Lucifer's 'Baccanale' and Pilgrims' chant, Scene 3



A transitional orchestral intermezzo, representing the continued journey of Elsie and the Prince, returns to the saltarello material. This effectively acts as the concluding frame to the first metastructure of the scene, for after this point, as 'they reach a height overlooking the sea, and encamp', Sullivan creates an extended bipartite design. The first is one of his most visionary pictorial sections ('It is the sea') in which one imagines a panoramic seascape through Sullivan's bold use of unusual harmonic progressions and spacious orchestration. Couched in B flat minor, this through-composed passage is ultimately preludial to its relative major, D flat, for the finale ('The night is calm'). Here Sullivan returns to something of its former operatic instincts in a more conventional 'aria and chorus' structure, the later a more climactic version of the former (Example 9).

### **5.2.3 Scenes 4-6**

Scene 4 provides the principal dramatic counterpart to Scene 3 in that it depicts the high point of the plot where Elsie is rescued, Lucifer's plan is foiled and Prince Henry redeems his honour. As with much of Scene 3, Scene 4 is framed in A and begins at the Salerno medical school with Lucifer dressed as a doctor, though we are left in no doubt as to his presence by the reiteration of his wind band material from Scene 1. Indeed, this recurrence of Lucifer's theme signals the recapitulation of numerous ideas from Scenes 1-3, a fact vividly witnessed in Lucifer's appropriation of Elsie's prayer in Scene 2 (see p. 64) in which her tonality (F major) is also recalled.

90

ELSIE.

The night is calm and cloud - less, And

still as still . . . can be, The stars . . .

. . . come forth to lis - ten, come forth . . . to . . .

*Ped.* \* *Ped.* \* *Ped.* \*

Example 9: 'The night is calm' ('Aria and Chorus), Scene 3

As Elsie submits herself to die - a moment of great pathos - Sullivan introduces (as we have now so often seen) an unaccompanied partsong ('O pure in heart'), copperfastening the symbolism of G flat as the key of purity and innocence. In response Elsie calls to mind the music she sang in Scene 2 (see Example 7), again in exactly the same tonal context. This is enough, however, for the Prince to realise the enormity of the situation. Lucifer, with his persistent A minor, nevertheless presses ahead which

excites the Prince to throw off his self-pity, and with his chorus of attendants, they burst open the door in an act of true Verdian high operatic melodrama. It is possible here to sense over-compression on the part of Bennett and Sullivan. The climax of the story, which might have withstood more lengthy and studied treatment, passes by with some velocity that there is almost danger of anticlimax. However, the situation is rescued by Sullivan's deft sense of uncertainty (replete with its reminiscence of the Prince's restless misery in the orchestral coda) as the scene comes to its precipitous conclusion. Has Elsie survived? Has the Prince saved her? Indeed, Sullivan maintains this sense of uncertainty until the happy outcome announced by a simple 'Forester' in Scene 5, in the 'preamble' to Ursula's powerful and euphonious aria, strongly redolent of *Elijah*, 'Virgin, who lovest the poor and lowly' (Example 10):

The image shows a page of a musical score, numbered 114. The tempo is marked 'Andante Allegretto.' and the time signature is 2/4. The key signature has three sharps (F#, C#, G#). The score is for Ursula, with the lyrics 'Vir - gin, who lov - est the poor and'. The music is written for voice and piano. The piano part features a prominent bass line with a 'p' (piano) dynamic marking. The score is presented on a white background with a grey bar at the bottom.

#### Example 10: Ursula's aria, Scene 5

Here Sullivan introduces a new tonality, E major, as the summation of Elsie's selfless and all-conquering virtue - one which will return in the Epilogue to supersede the symbolism of G flat/F#. Ursula's aria is also a demonstration of Sullivan's brilliant timing within the work as a whole (and one which he had exercised with such legerdemain in his operettas). The aria, while having its full thematic impact, is sufficiently concise in its brevity (and note the splendid interplay of orchestra and voice at the restatement of the principal melody - p. 115) to act as an intermezzo to the main event, the Finale and Epilogue.

The Finale, which recalls the corresponding conclusion of Scene 3, is in D flat and it is this key that underpins a 'ballad' form as the central focus to the scene (as Prince Henry recounts the tale of Fastrada's ring and the legend of Charlemagne). Narrative as this form is, D flat is never permitted to cadence as the events of the story unfold. This task is given to the lovers' closing duet ('In life's delight') in which they appropriately affirm their devotion. At this stage of the work Sullivan undoubtedly knew that the second half had been glaringly devoid of much choral involvement. In fact the presence of so much solo work in *The Golden Legend* inevitably accentuates its operatic properties. Hence, it was entirely fitting that, to balance the Prologue, a choral Epilogue would be necessary. For this Sullivan constructed a fascinating hybrid of choral 'aria' ('God sent his messenger'), made up of two verses for lower voices and upper voices respectively, and more conventional

fugue ('The deed divine), based on the opening of Scene 2, in more Handelian manner (Example 11). The innate purpose of the more developmental fugue is to

li - tudes of death, the so - li - tudes of

*sempre f*  
death, The deed di - vine Is writ - ten in cha - rac - ters of gold, . . is writ -  
ALTO.  
death. The deed di -

- ten in cha - rac - ters of gold That nev - er, nev -  
vine is writ - ten in cha - rac - ters of gold, . . is writ - - ten in  
TENOR.  
The deed di - vine is writ - ten in

- er shall grow old, nev - er shall . . grow old,  
cha - rac - ters of gold, That nev - er shall grow old, . . that never shall . .  
cha - rac - ters of gold, . . is writ - - ten in cha - rac - ters of  
BASS.  
The deed di - vine is writ - ten in cha - rac - ters of

The deed di - vine is writ - ten in cha - rac - ters of

Example 11: 'The deed divine' (Handelian fugue), Epilogue

reach a sufficient climax for the partial unison recapitulation of a final verse (its second part) as concluding apotheosis and moral summation. Mackenzie greatly admired this ending. Stanford, on the other hand, levelled an astute criticism which was also symptomatic of Scene 4:

It may be questioned whether this section has not also been over-compressed. It would not have been difficult to include the fine lines suggesting the defeat of Lucifer, which form so effective a parallel to the Prologue. Such a course would naturally have involved a more extended and developed finale, but the work could well have borne such an addition, and the unity of the story would have been still more complete.<sup>25</sup>

### 5.3 Reception

On 10 September, Sullivan travelled to Leeds for the choirs' first rehearsal of the work. Sullivan engaged his favourite soloists for the performance: Emma Albani as Elsie, Edward Lloyd as the Prince, Madame Patti sang Ursula and Frederick King as Lucifer. The performance on Saturday 16 October was an immediate and great success. The *Leeds Mercury* reported:

How can we describe the scene which followed the last note of the cantata. Let the reader imagine an audience rising to its feet in thunderous approval, a chorus cheering with heart and soul. Or raining flowers down upon the composer and an orchestra coming out of their habitual calm to wax fervid in demonstration. Never was a more heartfelt ovation. Ovation! Nay, it was a great triumph, one such as acclaimed the successful soldiers of Rome.<sup>26</sup>

Although expressed in terms of excessive hyperbole, the reviewer was not alone in his praise. Adulation came from various quarters. The critic of *The Daily Telegraph*

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<sup>25</sup> Stanford 1908, 160-1.

<sup>26</sup> *Leeds Mercury*, 18 October 1886.

described it as 'a greater, more legitimate and more undoubted triumph than that of the new cantata has not been achieved within my experience.'<sup>27</sup> Louis Engel, notorious for his caustic pen and often unsympathetic towards new indigenous composition,<sup>28</sup> called it 'one of the greatest creations we have had for many years. Original, bold, inspired, grand in conception, in execution, in treatment, it is a composition which will make an "epoch" and which will carry the name of its composer higher on the wings of fame and glory. The effect it produced at rehearsal was enormous. The effect of the public performance was unprecedented.'<sup>29</sup> The critic of *The Spectator*, while unable to resist a jibe at Sullivan's comic-opera past, was one of many who drew to attention to Sullivan's handling of larger orchestral forces, wishing perhaps that the great German baritone, George Henschel, famous for his role as Mephistopheles in Berlioz's *The Damnation of Faust* could have been engaged for the performance:

But the success of the Festival was undoubtedly achieved by Sir Arthur Sullivan's *Golden Legend*, a welcome surprise to those who, like the present writer, had imagined him unable to extricate himself from the comic-opera rut. The public, as it is well known, did not encourage his earlier aspirations after a high ideal; but it is not too late to hope that, by the welcome accorded to this fine work, he may be induced to return to those higher branches of composition in which a musician can alone win abiding fame. The outlines of *The Golden Legend* inevitably suggest those of *Faust*, and it is therefore all the more to the composer's credit that he should have avoided a musical treatment calculated to provoke comparisons. There are undoubtedly some reminiscences in the work, chiefly of Berlioz, but they are more of general manner than of detail. The work throughout is scored with a master's hand, and by its transference fully deserves the praise given to the score of Mendelssohn's

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<sup>27</sup> Op. cit. in Jacobs, 247.

<sup>28</sup> After several ruinous libel cases, Engel eventually fled to Paris in 1890 where he spent the rest of his life in a French garret.

<sup>29</sup> Op. cit. in Harris, R., *The Golden Legend* (R. Clyde: Chorleywood 1986), iv.



Midsummer Night's Dream by a French critic in the expression, " Cette vaporeuse partition." Where all is so good, it is difficult to particularise, but we may especially call attention to the truly impressive setting, full of solemnity and mystery, of Prince Henry's words on catching sight of the sea, the brilliant orchestral accompaniment to Lucifer's praise of Alcohol, and, indeed, all the music assigned to the evil genius of the plot. The work would greatly gain if this role were assumed by a more animated singer,—Mr. Henschel, for example, of whom an Irishman once remarked, in connection with his performance in Berlioz's Faust, that he was "a heaven-born Mephistopheles."<sup>30</sup>

Perhaps one of the most surprising was from the critic of *The Times*, Francis Hueffer, who, like Dannreuther, had made his name in London as a campaigner for the music of Wagner, Liszt and Berlioz. In his last published book, *Half a Century of Music in England* (1888), Hueffer had sought to assess the position of music in his adopted country (having left Germany in 1869). Believing that the accession of Queen Victoria to the throne had instigated a new appreciation of music (his book bore the queen's dedication), he was keen to encourage the Teutonic influence, especially of Wagner, that was manifesting itself in the new symphonic tradition of Parry, Stanford, Cowen and others. In the case of Sullivan, he, like others, had been disapproving of his artistic choices and 'popular' acclaim. However, *The Golden Legend*, seemed for him to point to higher aspirations:

Sir Arthur Sullivan's position in the history of our music is altogether exceptional, if not unique. Royalty has delighted to honour him, and the popular verdict has endorsed the opinion of "society;" yet his time is largely occupied in the production of operettas which, excellent though they are of their kind, are not the class of work upon which great reputations are generally founded. That this gifted composer is capable of treading the higher walks of the art is sufficiently proved by such a work as "The Golden Legend," the opening of which, with its novel and poetic effect of cathedral bells made vocal and articulate, in my opinion reveals imaginative qualities of no common order, although the Berlin critics [see below] - who, by the

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<sup>30</sup> 'The Leeds Musical Festival', *The Spectator* (23 October 1886), 13.

way, went into raptures over *The Mikado* - failed to see it. Let us hope that Sir Arthur Sullivan will rise to still higher things in the future.<sup>31</sup>

#### 5.4 Performances in Berlin

Other important concert venues took up *The Golden Legend* with alacrity. In 1887 Sullivan, who was occupied throughout January with the composition and rehearsal of *Ruddigore* found himself in the Riviera at the end of February. Visiting Naples via Rome on 23 February a telegraph reached him from Dr Carlotta in Berlin asking him to conduct *The Golden Legend* on 26 March in Berlin. Carlotta was a great admirer of Sullivan's work. He had supported the enterprise that took *The Mikado* to Berlin and provided the translation for performances of *The Mikado* and *Patience* in German. On a visit to London late in 1886 Carlotta had offered to manage a Berlin performance of *The Golden Legend* and approached Sullivan with the offer. In the middle of February 1887 two performances were announced to the public and intended to take place during Easter week as part of the celebrations for the 90<sup>th</sup> birthday of the German Emperor William I. No doubt owing to the influence of the Crown Princess Victoria and her sons Prince William and Prince Henry, all of whom were Sullivan's personal friends, Carlotta was able to secure singers from the Court Opera as well as the opera house itself.

On 5 March Sullivan left Naples travelling by train to Berlin via Paris. The first performance on 26 March was at the Royal Opera House, Berlin. No doubt Sullivan would have expected that this performance would enhance his reputation in Europe,

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<sup>31</sup> Hueffer, F., *Half a Century of Music in England* (Chapman & Hall: London, 1889), 26.

but unfortunately, the soprano, whose knowledge of German was not good, had little idea of her part. Added to this was an antagonistic, not to say xenophobic feeling in some quarters that asking a British composer to celebrate the German Emperors birthday was unpatriotic. Barring the Prologue and Epilogue, the critic of the *Allgemeine Musik-Zeitung* could find few positive things to say. Familiar with the cleverness of the comic operas, the idea of Sullivan as a composer of serious music seemed incongruous and incompatible:

...it is not what one could have been led to expect from Sir Arthur Sullivan, in view of the fact that his comic opera, *The Mikado*, left us with the impression of a gifted and clever composer.... Sullivan does not here rely so much on the example of Mendelssohn so far as melody is concerned as on Mendelssohn's thoughtless followers; there are also some modern influences, much filtered down, to be remarked. Comparatively speaking the most important parts of the work are the Prologue and Epilogue; the three last main sections of the work are absolutely feeble and flavourless.<sup>32</sup>

In London Louis Engel wrote that Sullivan

.....had many disadvantages to contend against. The original bells had been lent to a musical society in Dublin, which in spite of the urgent entreaties of Sir Arthur Sullivan.....refused to return them before a certain date...Deep toned Chinese gongs were therefore employed, but they failed to give the desired effect... The first scene, sung by Herr Rothmuhl (Prince Henry) and Her Grolop (Lucifer) went excellently and was warmly applauded. The solo for Ursula (Lamert) and the unaccompanied Evening Hymn might have been repeated, so rapturous was the applause. Then came one of the most extraordinary episodes ever experienced in musical history. The soprano rose, and began to sing. Composition, composer, and all the other executants were unheeded, and everyone was filled with wonderment at the extraordinary exhibition. Forcing her voice, and singing chronically nearly a quarter of a tone sharp, the young lady had not only disdained the notes the composer had written, but sang with a reckless disregard of time, rhythm and accent, perfectly astounding.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Op. cit. in Young, P., *Sir Arthur Sullivan* (J. M. Dent: London 1971), 147.

<sup>33</sup> *The World* (April 1887).

The critic of the *Musical Times* (probably Engel again) noted:

The performance began with the clanging of the gongs. For a time all went well. But as soon as Elsie came upon the scene there was an end to all hope. From the first phrase to the last Madame Pattini sang hardly a bar with correctness. Not only was she out of tune, but apparently unable to give the notes their right value, It became impossible, therefore, to accompany her in the passage for voice and Cor Anglais "My Redeemer and My Lord"; the conductor had to signal the instrumental performer to stop.<sup>34</sup>

The second performance was scheduled for 29 March, but it was out of the question to use Pattini again although she wrote to the press pleading that she had a cold.

Count Hochberg, Director of the Court Opera, suggested Miss Beeth, a member of the Berlin Opera Company as a replacement, and, although she shrank from the responsibility, she could not well refuse. Sullivan, however, dreading another fiasco, telegraphed to Emma Albani, whom he knew to be in Antwerp; she replied that she could reach Berlin by Friday 1 April, and the performance was therefore rescheduled for the day after. The difficulties, however, did not end at that, because although the chorus agreed to perform on the new date, the orchestra had accepted another engagement on that day. Sullivan and Mr Wolff, the impresario, managed to persuade the virtuoso who had engaged the orchestra to change the date of his own concert, although the Dublin conductor still refused to allow Sullivan the use of his own bells. However, arrangements were finally completed and at 7 a.m. on Friday morning, Madame Albani (who had sung in *La Traviata* the previous evening) set out by train from Antwerp. Sixteen hours later, Sullivan was on the railway platform to meet her train at Berlin.

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<sup>34</sup> *Musical Times*, 1 May 1887, 265-6.

The second Berlin performance, again in the Royal Opera House, took place on 2 April. Madame Albani, singing her part in English (which must have seemed strangely anomalous, and certainly jarred with the critic of the *Allgemeine Musik-Zeitung*),<sup>35</sup> replaced the soubrette Pattini, whilst the other soloists reprised their parts, singing Carlotta's German translation. It was, however, a redeeming performance and Sullivan broke Count Hochebergs rule, which forbade encores, by acceding to a repeat of 'Onward and Onward', the duet for Elsie and Prince Henry which opens Scene 3. In his diary on 2 April Sullivan noted: '7.30 2<sup>nd</sup> performance of The Golden Legend in the Opera house. Full house. Royal Family all there. Very good performance. Albani superb. Duet encored. Great enthusiasm and ovation at the end.'<sup>36</sup> All this seemed to fly in the face of the *Allgemeine Musik-Zeitung's* overwhelming negativity. In her memoirs Albani recollected with some pride: 'The performance took place in the Opera House before a crowded audience, which included the Crown Prince and Princess and several members of the Royal Family, and culminated in a great success. Sir Arthur and I were called to the front many times during the evening and after the second part I was sent for to the Royal box, and heartily congratulated by the Prince and Princess. The critics said that "Madame Albani had shown them the beauties of the work, which had not been apparent at the first hearing, and had converted a comparative failure into a triumph".'<sup>37</sup> *Murray's Magazine* reported that the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra had begged Sullivan's

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<sup>35</sup> Young, 147.

<sup>36</sup> Diary of Arthur Sullivan, Pierpoint Morgan Library, New York.

<sup>37</sup> Albani, E., *Forty Years of Song*, (Mills & Boon Ltd: London 1911), 205.

permission to repeat *The Golden Legend* in May (especially as they had already advertised a third performance) but, according to Albani, Sullivan, worried by the first fiasco decided against any further performances.<sup>38</sup>

## 5.5 Other performances

The first of several American performances took place on 11 March 1887 at the Central Mission Hall Chicago conducted by William L. Tomlin. Performances in London soon followed. All in all, there were 17 performances of the cantata during its premiere season and it continued to be in demand for many years after. In May 1888, there was a command performance for Queen Victoria at the Royal Albert Hall<sup>39</sup> and it was on this occasion that she famously implored Sullivan to write a grand opera, supposedly saying 'you should write a grand opera Sir Arthur, you would do it so well'.<sup>40</sup> A performance at St. James' Hall was reviewed in *The Times* (one of the seventeen performances which were given in the premiere season). The correspondent commented with enthusiasm that: 'On Tuesday evening St James's Hall was crowded by one of the largest audiences ever assembled there, the attraction being Sir Arthur Sullivan's *The Golden Legend* performed for the second time in London under the composer's personal direction.'<sup>41</sup> The original soloists performed on this occasion and the 'chorus and orchestra gave a satisfactory account

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> The performance was given on Tuesday afternoon, 8<sup>th</sup> May 1888 by the Royal Albert Hall Choral Society conducted by Sullivan himself. The organist was Dr Stainer.

<sup>40</sup> Bailey, L., 1952, 286

<sup>41</sup> *The Times*, 29 November 1886.

of the not very formidable difficulties of the music'.<sup>42</sup> On this occasion, Gounod's mass preceded *The Golden Legend*. The popularity of the Sullivan piece saw no signs of diminishing, as the years went by, because in a review of a performance given very close to the premiere of *The Gondoliers* the article on the Leeds Musical Festival read:

It was only natural that a repetition should be given of *The Golden Legend*, the triumphant success of the last festival, and it is not wonderful that, although tonight's concert was an extra one, the town hall was packed from floor to ceiling, many additional seats being provided -- in many of the choral numbers and more especially the 'epilogue' the choir sang finely, and even when their besetting sin of sinking in pitch was committed, as was almost inevitable in the unaccompanied numbers, Sir Arthur Sullivan's clever device of recommencing the accompaniment on a note of ambiguous meaning saved the fault from being generally observed.<sup>43</sup>

On 12 June 1888 the Cambridge University Musical Society gave a performance in the Cambridge Guildhall under the baton of its conductor, Stanford, who much admired the work. On this occasion Sullivan was a guest of the Stanfords at their home in Harvey Road, and came up from London on the train with Parry.<sup>44</sup> In July he travelled to Chester where he conducted a performance with the fiery American soprano, Lillian Nordica, as Elsie.<sup>45</sup> Then came its premiere at the Birmingham Festival of 1888 where it was given under Richter. Sullivan did not attend. His hostility to the festival since Richter's appointment in 1885 still bristled, and the fact that Birmingham had not consulted him about the performance nor of the work's

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> *The Times*, 14 October 1889.

<sup>44</sup> Jacobs, A., 268.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

position in the Festival programme did little to warm his sympathies.<sup>46</sup> In 1889 it was the turn of the Three Choirs Festival, by now not Sullivan's natural 'home':

The Shire Hall was, of course, crowded to overflowing for ... which Madame Albani and Mr Lloyd sang the parts created by them three years ago at Leeds and Miss Hilda Wilson and Mr Bereton completed the quartet of soloists - at the beginning of 'the night is calm' the conductor had some difficulty in inducing his singers to rise, but once on their feet they did valiantly and on the whole it is not too much to say that a finer performance has scarcely been given, of course with the exception of the original production at Leeds three years ago. Sir Arthur Sullivan was cheered to the echo at his appearance at the conductor's desk and again at the conclusion of the work and of a day which had exhibited his remarkable powers as a composer in the most favourable light.<sup>47</sup>

In 1893 *The Times*, writing about a performance in which Henschel was finally hired for the role of Lucifer, reported no diminution in the popularity given to the work, stating that 'this morning's performance of Sir Arthur Sullivan's Golden Legend attracted a very large audience numbering 1,357 to St. James's Hall'.<sup>48</sup> Several of the original soloists were engaged again, apart from: 'Mr Henschel who was - not the original exponent of the music of Lucifer, but of all who have essayed it, he is doubtless the most successful in realizing the composer's intentions'. Here again, the intonation was commented on: 'the basses got sadly out of tune, but in the pretty chorus 'O pure in heart' the singers only fell the semitone which the composer had so ingeniously allowed for'.<sup>49</sup> In the review of the first performance the writer made an interesting observation which illustrates Sullivan as a character: 'Sir Arthur Sullivan showed great restraint in this great undertaking reserving his own

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<sup>46</sup> See letter from Arthur Sullivan to *The Times*, 28 August 1888.

<sup>47</sup> *The Times*, 6 September 1889.

<sup>48</sup> *The Times*, 5 October 1893.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*



contribution for the last day, when the receptivity of the public and the freshness of the voices might have been supposed to be exhausted by the severe strains of the preceding concerts. His modesty met with the reward it merited, for on no previous occasion had the chorus sung with more fire and delicacy, and, making due allowance even for the excitement of a festival audience, it cannot for a moment be doubted that *The Golden Legend* roused genuine enthusiasm.<sup>50</sup>

## 5.6 Peer Reception

After the great flurry of performances during Sullivan's lifetime, the Edwardian era nevertheless witnessed a falling off of popularity after the composer's death. Yet, it cannot be gainsaid that it was one of Sullivan's greatest successes, not only chorally, but among the entire variety of his output. So popular indeed did the work become among choral societies that he was wont to call a moratorium on its performance fearing that the work would become overexposed. As has been mentioned, it was admired by Hueffer who was otherwise a dyed-in-the-wool Teuton. Elgar admired the work greatly and it is not difficult to see how the younger composer might have gleaned numerous examples from the work for his own choral essays of the 1890s<sup>51</sup>. Elgar himself mined the resources of Longfellow in *The Spanish Serenade*, *The Black Knight* and *Scenes from King Olaf*, and it perhaps no accident that Sullivan admired

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<sup>50</sup> *The Times* 18 October 1886.

<sup>51</sup> It is perhaps not a coincidence that the tenor solo at the beginning of *The Dream of Gerontious* is strongly reminiscent of Prince Henry's opening phrase 'I cannot sleep'.

Coleridge-Taylor's setting of Longfellow's *Hiawatha* when he heard the premiere at the Royal College of Music in 1888 (as did Elgar).

Yet, the most penetrating and intelligent comment of *The Golden Legend* - in the form of no less than an essay - came from one of Sullivan's immediate contemporaries, Charles Villiers Stanford, who was at the Leeds premiere. It was probably the very first major criticism he made, for the *National Review*, and was later reprinted in a volume of his writings, *Studies and Memories*, of 1908.<sup>52</sup> Stanford was not especially well known as a critic. He wrote little for weekly or monthly journals in the earlier part of his career and only later, as an older man kicking against modern change, did he become more voluble, particularly as the author of letters to newspapers and weekly musical journals. Stanford, has not been considered an admirer of Sullivan's or his music, yet neither is, in fact, true, perhaps because their relationship was clouded by the episode of the conductorship of the Leeds Festival after Sullivan's resignation in 1898 or because Stanford was prepared to contradict those who thought Sullivan a 'second Beethoven'.<sup>53</sup> Stanford's parents, both of them highly musical, were witness to a private hearing of Sullivan's *The Tempest* at the home of Henry Chorley in 1862 'and foretold a future for the composer'.<sup>54</sup> This information was almost certainly relayed to their son. The men first met while Stanford was still a teenager at the home of the engineer John Scott

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<sup>52</sup> Stanford, C. V., 'Sullivan's "Golden Legend"', *National Review*, 8 (1886-7), 400-7; reprinted in *Studies and Memories* (London 1908), 156-69. Stanford was to exercise his critical acumen in the same way on two further occasions for the first performances of Parry's *Judith* at Birmingham (1888) and Verdi's *Falstaff* at La Scala, Milan (1893).

<sup>53</sup> See Dibble 2002, 292ff. and 326.

<sup>54</sup> Stanford, C. V., *Pages from an Unwritten Diary* (Edward Arnold: London 1914), 73.

Russell,<sup>55</sup> and they enjoyed the rediscovery of Bach together at the home of a mutual friend, the musical lawyer, Arthur Coleridge.<sup>56</sup> As an undergraduate he admired *Cox and Box* which he saw both in London and Cambridge,<sup>57</sup> and he later greatly admired the music to *The Tempest* and *Kenilworth*. As mentioned above, he shared the common view of his *confrères* in the profession that Sullivan had not yet exercised to full capacity the great promise he had shown as a Leipzig student, and that much of his talent had been wasted in London's theatre land,<sup>58</sup> but this view rarely impeded Stanford from offering incisive criticism of a work which his other contemporaries, drunk with praise and devotion, failed to see or were prepared to suggest. Nevertheless, for all his criticisms of *The Golden Legend*, Stanford considered a work 'fully worthy of his [Sullivan's] maturity',<sup>59</sup> and transformed his reputation overnight:

Suddenly the situation changes. The *Golden Legend* is produced and raises Sullivan's reputation at a stroke to the point which it might reasonably have been expected to have reached, if the intervening years had been spent upon the most earnest and serious development of the promise of his earlier work. It restores him to his legitimate position as one of the leaders of the English School, and, inasmuch as the genuine success of his last composition will have made a return to less elevated forms of the art a matter of difficulty, if not of impossibility, the musical world may be led to hope for a series of lasting treasures from his genius....The composer of the *Golden Legend* must now give posterity the chance of enjoying the fruits of his genius, and stay his hand from works which, however refined and musicianly, must of their very nature and surroundings be ephemeral, and pass away with the fashion which gave them birth. His powers as a creative musician and his position in the musical

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 82.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 54.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 108.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 162.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 161.

world alike demand his progression in the direction indicated by his latest production.<sup>60</sup>

As mentioned above, Stanford had much to say on the libretto. By 1886 he was an experienced (and often unjustly chastened) author of three operas, a large-scale Birmingham oratorio and several choral works. He understood the reasons for the necessary compression of Longfellow's poem and the musicality of the poet's rhythms, not least because he had attempted a choral work on the same words not long after Longfellow's *Christus* had become available in print.<sup>61</sup> Ambitious as Stanford was in 1874-5, and he clearly had notions of expanding Longfellow's words into at least two acts, he decided to abandon the work having only completed seven scenes of 'Part I'. However, as we have seen, he harboured doubts about the excessive compression of the poem where certain essential points of the drama had been lost. He also sensed, with some credibility, that the characters of the story were actually 'ill connected',<sup>62</sup> and challenging to realise in terms of their humanity. Here it felt (rightly) that the female characters - Elsie and Ursula - were most sympathetically achieved; they have, after all, the most extended solo material and the most thematically sustained. On the other hand, the male characters of Prince Henry and Lucifer are much more difficult to contend with. This Stanford recognised,<sup>63</sup> and with Lucifer, in particular, the task of purging the similarities of *Faust* was almost insuperable. Yet, Stanford believed that Sullivan had brought real

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<sup>60</sup> Stanford 1908, 162-3.

<sup>61</sup> See Dibble 2002, 65-6.

<sup>62</sup> Stanford 1908, 157.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 157.

life to Lucifer (which was later a serious stumbling block to Parry's characterisation in *Job* six years later) and 'by development of the satirical pedantry of the figure, and a happy avoidance of conventional devil-music,' and here no doubt Scene 3 was especially in his mind, 'strengthens the poem of Longfellow in its weakest point.'<sup>64</sup> With Prince Henry, the process of compression endangered interest in his character, yet, arguably, just enough control is gained by the Prince's music in Scene 4 which is of considerable quality. Nor did Stanford lay the blame of Elsie's precipitous resolve to sacrifice herself for the Prince in Scene 2 without any sense of engaging with her character at the door of either Bennett or Sullivan, though he did offer the remedy of an excerpt from the third scene of Longfellow's poem (in the garden of the farm in the Odenwald) which would have provided her with the necessary and comprehensible motive.<sup>65</sup>

Much of Stanford's admiration was predicated on Sullivan's masterly scoring and of a consistency of style that, notwithstanding 'a pleasant whiff of the *Meistersinger*' in Lucifer's contrapuntal music, an affinity for the melodic gift of Schubert, shades of Berlioz in the storm music and a suggestion of Meyerbeer in Elsie's prayer,<sup>66</sup> he had made his own. But there was also much approbation for the character of the individual scenes - the duet between Lucifer and Prince Henry, the serene beauty of Elsie's prayer, the excitement of Scene 3 with Lucifer's brilliant cynicism and the soliloquies of Prince Henry and Elsie (with their unorthodox

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 163.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 160.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 164-6.

harmonies), and the duet between the Prince and Elsie in Scene 6 which was 'beyond doubt the gem of the whole' and comparable with the great duet of *Kenilworth*.<sup>67</sup> Surprisingly Stanford was indifferent to Ursula's soliloquy in Scene 5, surely no less strong in its Schubertian melodic invention. Only in the Epilogue did he express reservation between the monophonic and fugal delivery of the chorus where he felt 'the mixture of styles [seemed] to damage the design,'<sup>68</sup> though, quite evidently, Mackenzie (who was also in the audience with Stanford) did not concur:

At the Leeds Festival in October of the same year Sullivan's cantata, *The Golden Legend*, made the instant and popular appeal it richly deserved. His simple-minded Elsie put both Dvořák's Bohemian saint [*St Ludmila*] and my Arab chief [*The Story of Sayid*] into a modest corner. As on the first occasion, despite present-day opinions, I never hear the touching Epilogue (and other portions) without a moistening eye; nor am I in the least ashamed of the fact.<sup>69</sup>

## 5.7 Decline of Reputation

The real decline in the reputation of *The Golden Legend* ultimately began with Ernest Walker's denunciation in *A History of Music in England* in 1907, and his opinions continued to be quoted, unchanged, in Westrup's third edition in the 1940s. Walker, who could only see 'cheap sentimentality' in the principal theme of the *In Memoriam* Overture (a work that, nowadays, stands up strongly as a coherent and well-composed orchestral overture), saw the same weak aesthetic in 'O pure in heart' in *The Golden Legend*.<sup>70</sup> Having denounced the 'mildly pleasant picturesqueness' of the

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 166-7.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 168.

<sup>69</sup> Mackenzie, A. C., *A Musician's Narrative* (Cassell & Co.: London, 1927), 146.

<sup>70</sup> Walker, E., *A History of Music in England* (Clarendon Press: Oxford, 1907), 294.

*Martyr of Antioch*,<sup>71</sup> he could only damn *The Golden Legend* with faint praise. Still present was the prejudice of light opera, the lament as to his promise at Leipzig, a bias towards Brahms, and the *topos* of talent-squandering, all of which refused to go away:

In *The Golden Legend* Sullivan no doubt pulled himself together to some extent; the Prologue (apart from the conventional chromatics), the end of Scene I, parts of the 'Journey to Salerno', of the love-duet, of the Epilogue - these show traces of the early talent, less satisfactory because more pretentious, but in their rather superficial way romantically pleasant enough. And indeed, apart from the painful lapses in the already mentioned 'O pure in heart' and at the end of 'O gladsome light', the rest of the work is hardly ever anything worse than dull drawing-room music; but for the best-known English composer in the very prime of life, and putting forth his full powers, *The Golden Legend* is, as a whole, a melancholy production.<sup>72</sup>

Walker's condemnation of the work must have contributed substantially to its rapid falling away, and almost 60 years later, Frank Howes could do little more than to offer the same critical sensibility:

*The Golden Legend*, which alone of the oratorio-cantatas preserved for a while any semblance of life, shows just how far his firm stride upon the high road of good serious music is let down by weakness at the knees. The book extracted from Longfellow by Joseph Bennett of *The Daily Telegraph* is not free from bathos, but it suffers from a worse defect in that most of the scenes are laid at eventide and woke almost at once Sullivan's evensong manner. He includes beside "O gladsome light", a psalm with organ accompaniment, some plainchant and a *religioso* partsong "O pure in heart"; Ursula's music is a cross between the usual fussy operatic contralto's attentions to the heroine and a meek Victorian hymn-singer.

Howes could only admit merit in the storm music and the duet for Elsie and Prince Henry. Otherwise, Sullivan's score had little to offer to contemporary audiences:

But this eloquence of Victorian vespers cannot be taken seriously today, and we are left asking ourselves how it is that such robust and accomplished people as the

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

Victorians sank into anaemic complacency when their softer, and especially their religious, emotions were touched. Colles compares Lucifer's Prologue to its detriment, "flaccid and nerveless", with Parry's *Prometheus*.<sup>73</sup>

Howes's final comment, of course, gave a clue as to the agenda of his book and thesis, and central to that thesis was the position of Parry's dramatic cantata, *Prometheus Unbound* of 1880, a work which, Howes believed, was key to his concept of a Teutonic-orientated 'English Musical Renaissance' in which Sullivan's strangely maverick eclecticism did not happily fit. More to the point, Sullivan's undeniably Victorian position was still an aesthetic obstacle for Howes's generation whose anti-Victorian views had been inculcated by forbears too close to an era of which they fought hard to divest themselves. With Percy Young's book on Sullivan of 1971, a slightly more measured summation was forthcoming. There was still a lack of enthusiasm for the characterisation - 'the devil is not credible, nor is the heroine, whose resolve to sacrifice her own life to save that of Prince Henry is conveyed, alas, in terms more suitable for a governess'.<sup>74</sup> One wonders, if the 'terms' had been expressed in Italian, French or German, whether this sense of discomfort would have been quite so acerbic. And his criticism of Stanford's incisive and largely constructive commentary as being 'almost as ill-judged as those with which he later condemned Elgar's *Gerontius*' (itself an outdated and untrue remark),<sup>75</sup> seem not only injudicious and over-general, not least because they both concurred on the great merits of Sullivan's handling of the orchestra. Young, perhaps endeavouring to

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<sup>73</sup> Howes, F., *The English Musical Renaissance* (Secker & Warburg: London 1966), 55.

<sup>74</sup> Young, 226.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 227, n14.



equate Sullivan's great effort with the work, referred to *The Golden Legend* as an 'oratorio',<sup>76</sup> which it clearly was not. However, Young did make the point that in the pages of his dramatic cantata, Sullivan was in the process of experimenting with form and style as 'a trial run over territory of grand opera',<sup>77</sup> in which the more ambitious scores of *The Yeoman of the Guard* (1888) and *Ivanhoe* (1891) beckoned. In this, Queen Victoria's comments were prophetic.

Since Young's critical biography, much of Sullivan's work has been subject to a new scrutiny, revision and advocacy of which Nigel Burton's article '100 Years of a Legend' was symptomatic. Burton's case for *The Golden Legend* was that it was by no means a perfect work, but it contained much music of merit and boldness, and, perhaps most significantly, the yardsticks with which he measured the merits of the cantata were those of three *stage* works - *Iolanthe*, *Princess Ida* and *The Yeoman of the Guard*<sup>78</sup> - bearing witness to the spirit of *The Golden Legend* that it was conceived essentially as an *opéra-manquée* (just as Elgar's oratorios were). Moreover, *The Golden Legend* has so much to say about the composer's powers of creativity and style and, in terms of this thesis, his own personal and unconventional approach to the idiom of choral music. In this alone, *The Golden Legend* should therefore rightly take its place as one of Sullivan's most important achievements. But perhaps even more auspiciously, with the much greater knowledge that we now possess of Victorian musical culture, and our distance from the era (which has allowed us to relinquish

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 226.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

the baggage of an older generation's ingrained prejudice), we can now hear Sullivan's work (not least because we now have a modern professional recording<sup>79</sup>) in order to judge afresh its obvious merits for ourselves.

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<sup>79</sup> *The Golden Legend*, Hyperion Records CDA67280.

## CONCLUSION

Today Sullivan is little known as a composer of choral music. In part this is of course due to the enduring ubiquity of his Savoy operas and the composer's associations with his librettist, W. S. Gilbert, but it is also because so few of his choral works are performed today (although new recordings indicate a rekindling of awareness and appreciation), a predicament made more difficult through the unavailability of performing materials. A good deal of this neglect is perhaps due to the formation of the English choral canon which has formed itself around a nucleus of works by Parry, Stanford and Elgar who contributed a substantial amount of music to the phenomenon of the choral festival at its zenith at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century. Sullivan, by comparison, composed, a slender output of choral works. Though he was initially receptive to the choral scene in the first part of his career, his principal focus, for much of his life, was the theatre and the composition of operatic music; his frame of mind was geared to dramaturgy, a disposition that did not sit happily within a musical genre shaped by the imperative of chorus and desires of the choral society.

After Sullivan's death in 1900, the musical world chose to ignore his choral music and, while the satirical nature of his Savoy operas endured<sup>1</sup>, the 'serious' sentiment of his remaining output had no appeal, especially after the watershed of

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<sup>1</sup> Due in no small part to the continuous performances of the D'Oyly Carte Opera Company until their closure in February 1982.

the First World War in which much Victorian and Edwardian music was rapidly cast aside. The objectivity of much musical literature did not assist with any rehabilitation. Lawrence, a biographer Sullivan endorsed, wisely acknowledged that it would take time for the composer's reputation to revive:

The musical renaissance of Great Britain is part of the history of the last thirty years. It must be left to posterity to give it definition. How truly that renaissance has been due to the genius of Sullivan, and the fact that he has been able to write, so to speak, coram populo, will be determinable when the historian is able to impartially analyse the work and influence of the men of this generation, at a time when our present petty jealousies and differences of opinion will have been relegated to oblivion.<sup>2</sup>

Even at Lawrence's time of writing, a good deal of the contemporary criticism of Sullivan's choral works could often be considerably polarised, especially with works such as *The Light of the World*, *The Martyr of Antioch* and *The Golden Legend*. Fuller Maitland's obituary notice in *Cornhill Magazine* helped to affirm in many influential quarters of the music profession the *topos* that, save for *The Golden Legend* (where 'he had aimed high'), he had failed to devote himself to matters more serious:

Many who are able to appreciate classical music regret that Sir Arthur Sullivan did not aim consistently at higher things, that he set himself to rival Offenbach and Lecocq instead of competing on a level of high seriousness with such musicians as Sir Hubert Parry and Professor Stanford. If he had followed this path, he might have enrolled his name among the great composers of all time. He might have won a European reputation in addition to his fame at home. As it was, Sullivan became little known as a composer on the Continent.<sup>3</sup>

An advocate of Parry's and Stanford's Teutonic, intellectualist music, Fuller Maitland's agenda was all too clear, and it was one Elgar dubbed 'a shady side of

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<sup>2</sup> Lawrence, A., *Arthur Sullivan, Life Story, Letters and Reminiscences* (James Bowden: London 1899), 38

<sup>3</sup> *Cornhill Magazine*, (March 1900) 300-309. Not everyone concurred. Two letters (from Sir Frederick Bridge and an anonymous 'Musical Amateur') wrote to *The Times* the following day protesting the comparison and questioned the continental achievements of Sullivan's two contemporaries.

musical criticism...that foul unforgettable episode.'<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless Fuller Maitland's invective stood at the head of a body of unremittingly destructive criticism which others such as Walker and Howes built upon, and this view prevailed for over half a century, in spite of work in Sullivan's defence by Dunhill and Mackenzie.<sup>5</sup> Gervase Hughes's *The Music of Arthur Sullivan* (1959) did much to begin a process of rehabilitation, but Percy Young was guarded in his *Sir Arthur Sullivan* even though he adopted a more revisionist approach which continued with greater (if somewhat over-bellicose) conviction in the work of Nigel Burton, notably his article 'Sullivan reassessed: See how the fates'.<sup>6</sup>

Given the largely negative nature of this critical backdrop, this thesis has attempted to examine Sullivan's choral works from a new perspective - one that attempts to assess them in the light of the composer's creative aesthetic and instincts, what he brought to choral music and what he was trying to achieve within the idiom. One thing is certain: Sullivan by no means considered his choral music - or at least those works that were not *pièces d'occasion* - to be the object of less effort and artistic attention. In fact, the evidence is overwhelming that, in many instances, he exercised the full panoply of his technical mastery whether it was in melodic invention, harmonic imagination, orchestral resourcefulness or contrapuntal

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<sup>4</sup> These comments appeared in Elgar's lecture on 'Critics' in his series 'A Future for English Music' given in Birmingham in 1905. See Elgar, E., *A Future for English Music*, ed. P. Young (London 1968), 187. Also quoted in Young 1971, 264.

<sup>5</sup> Mackenzie delivered three lectures on Sullivan at the Royal Institution on 2, 9 and 16 May 1901; Thomas Dunhill, a pupil of Stanford, produced his important study of the comic operas in 1929 (see *Sullivan's Comic Operas*, London 1929).

<sup>6</sup> Burton, N., 'Sullivan reassessed: See how the fates', *Musical Times*, cxli (Winter 2000), 15-22.

ingenuity. In addition, he clearly viewed the choral commissions he received as creative openings, and, in the spirit of true Romanticism, grasped every opportunity to employ and reinvigorate those agencies of history, be it Tudor history, the music of Handel and Bach, medieval or Renaissance legend, historic and national dance and Baroque and Classical style-forms which he freely mixed with nineteenth-century models of partsong, Anglican hymnody, German chorale (and forms relevant thereto), intermezzo, Italian dramatic paradigms such as *scena ed aria* or *cabaletta*, melodrama, lieder, English popular song and choral recitative.

*Kenilworth* explored the idea of a modern 'masque' seen through the eyes of Sir Walter Scott and the musical prism of Handel, Mendelssohn and Italian opera. For the secular cantata, *On Shore and Sea*, with its novel dramatic fluctuation between one exotic *mis-en-scène* and the other, and set in medieval Genoa, Sullivan looked at the possibility of one-act opera (of which Rossini was a prime example) and the models of French *opéra bouffe* with their use of ballet. His two settings of the Te Deum text are strikingly different, in part dictated by their contexts and purposes, the first, for soli and chorus, as a symbol of thanksgiving for the recovery of the Prince of Wales, the other, entirely choral, a boost to morale at a most pressing stage of the Boer War. Both use the central focus of an 'external' melody: the 'Thanksgiving' Te Deum utilises the old chorale ST ANN with its strong national connotations (as well as plainsong and the 'Dresden Amen'), the 'Boer War' Te Deum the hymn tune ST GERTRUDE with its projection of imperial putative benevolence. But the differences do not stop here. In the Thanksgiving Te Deum

Sullivan was happy to bring a more worldly element of military march and operatic swagger to a text which English ears had largely equated with Handel's Dettingen setting of a century earlier. For the Boer War setting, performed at a time of national anxiety, the choral conception may have been more 'sacred' expressed through its more studied, homogeneous form, but the sense of 'theatrical tableau' still lingers behind the choral facade not least through the use of fanfares and marshal music (not least through ST GERTRUDE, a 'march-hymn').

When it came to the tradition of oratorio, Sullivan attempted the concept in its short form (*The Prodigal Son*) and long form (*The Light of the World*). Both works, as is evident from the composer's own comments, sought not so much simply to depict the narrative, but to explore the humanity of the main protagonists. In the former this was entirely necessary, since the amount of text of the original parable was short and required filling out with additional Biblical text. For the latter, the subject of Jesus of Nazareth was probably more than was realistic, even for a large-scale oratorio for Birmingham, but here too the nature of the work and its structure, while retaining an element of chronology, refused to follow the traditional format and narrative of Jesus's Passion. Rather, it sought to explore those quintessential emotional elements of Christ's encounters on a *human* level in quite a different way from the familiar format of Handel's *Messiah* and, thus, was strikingly at odds with convention.

It is perhaps self-evident from the discussion above that Sullivan's approach to his choral works was inexorably influenced by his affinity and love for the theatre,

rather than the concert hall. Not enamoured by the music of Brahms, and selective when it came to the operas of Wagner, his approach to extended choral canvases was neither symphonic nor developmental. For Sullivan the marrying of organic processes with the unfolding of a story seemed irrelevant, obscure, even gratuitous. To him the dramatic effect was everything and one that could best be achieved by those simpler vocal and orchestral set-piece forms in opera and ballet, mainly, though not exclusively, drawn from the Italian and French stages. The style of vocal solo was essentially melodic and vocally dominated, as one might find in Rossini, Donizetti or earlier Verdi, or the French variety as exhibited in Offenbach or Lecocq. The tuneful simplicity might even be derived, as in many of the Savoy operas, from the example of Mendelssohn in *St Paul* or (more likely) *Elijah*, or from popular English tunes of the eighteenth century with their more limited vocal range, euphony and linguistic appropriateness, or even drawing-room ballads familiar to many a Victorian. The 'Lady of the Lake' and 'I am a ruler on the sea' songs in *Kenilworth* speak for themselves. Many of the choruses, with their uncomplicated homophony follow schemes used frequently in the operas (the chorus of 'Heathen Maidens' and 'Christians' in *The Martyr of Antioch* is a prime example), and some are almost literally vocal 'dance' numbers, functioning as intermezzi. Many of the choruses, as one would expect in the context of the stage, are *turba* in character and role, though the treatment of these varies from highly effective exploitation of the unaccompanied partsong (of which 'Brother, thou art gone before us' is probably the most telling, though 'O gladsome light' in *The Golden Legend* also had a major impact)



to participation in through-composed melodramas. Simplicity of effect by no means precludes the dexterous use of counterpoint or fugal forms, and these, as has been demonstrated, are deployed with no lack of ingenuity, especially in the settings of the *Te Deum* and *The Light of the World*. Furthermore, an examination of the choral works has revealed that Sullivan's treatment of tonality was at the forefront of his dramatic discipline, whether in its use of direct dramatic effect, especially at moments of *anagnorisis*, of characterisation, or of more large-scale thinking across the entire span of a work.

It is, nevertheless, this very simplicity, this desire for directness, and the use of an operatic rhetoric in both form and musical gesture that jarred with those who equated 'high art' with German symphonic values (one which, incidentally, also excluded Mendelssohn). Hence, the Italian military march in the *Festival Te Deum*, which might have occupied a proud place in a Verdi opera, or the 'cabaletta' style of the music in the first chorus of *The Martyr of Antioch* had no place in the new cerebral world advocated by Fuller Maitland or Walker. Moreover, the very fact that Sullivan had so successfully parodied various operatic styles in his operettas probably did not help his cause.<sup>7</sup> Maitland's obituary encapsulates this standpoint concisely:

Among the lesser men who are still ranked with the great composers, there are many who may only have reached the highest level now and then, but without whose capacity it lies to attain great heights; some may have produced work on a direct level of mediocrity, but may have risen on some special occasions to a pitch of beauty or power which would establish their claim to be numbered among the great. Is there anywhere a case quite parallel to that of Sir Arthur Sullivan, who began his

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<sup>7</sup> See Williams, C., *Gilbert and Sullivan: Gender, Genre, Parody* (Columbia University Press: New York, 2012) 25-8.

career with a work which at once stamped him as a genius, and to the height of which he only rarely attained throughout his life?---though the illustrious masters of the past never did write music as vulgar, it would have been forgiven them if they had in virtue of their beauty and value of the great bulk of their productions. It is because such great natural gifts - gifts greater, perhaps, than fell to any English musician since the time of Purcell were so seldom employed in work worthy of them---if the author of *The Golden Legend*, the music of *The Tempest*, *Henry VIII* and *Macbeth* cannot be classed with them, how can the composer of 'Onward Christian Soldiers' and 'The Absent Minded Beggar' claim a place in the hierarchy of music among the men who would face death rather than smirch their singing robes for the sake of a fleeting popularity.<sup>8</sup>

Sullivan's setting of Kipling's 'Absent Minded Beggar' and his reaction to Fuller Maitland's indictment sums up the aesthetic gulf that divided them. The idea of the song was to donate all the proceeds from the sale to the wives and children of soldiers and sailors on active service in the Boer War. 'Did the idiot expect the words to be set in cantata form, or as a developed composition with symphonic introduction, contrapuntal treatment, etc?' Sullivan complained.<sup>9</sup>

Closer scrutiny of his later works, notably the two most overtly dramatic pieces, *The Martyr of Antioch* and *The Golden Legend*, reveals that Sullivan was not standing still as a composer and that he was still open and ready to assimilate contemporary dramatic ideas for his own purposes. There are hints of this in the pages of *The Light of the World*, but it is in *The Martyr of Antioch* and *The Golden Legend* that we see Sullivan visibly 'updating' his musical language and procedures in an absorbing period of experiment with hybrid genres. In this sense, *The Martyr of Antioch* is, rather like Schumann's *Genoveva*, 'Janus-like' in the way that a good deal

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<sup>8</sup> Fuller Maitland, J. A., [Sullivan] obituary, *Cornhill Magazine* (March 1901) 300-309

<sup>9</sup> Letter to Ben [Davies], 25 November 1900, op. cit, Jacobs, A., *Arthur Sullivan* (Oxford University Press: Oxford 1986), 391.

of the material still looks back to the formulae of the earlier choral works, yet, towards the end of the piece one is aware of new departures in the overtly operatic 'Hymn of Victory' and the Wagnerian declamation that follows. And by the time *The Golden Legend* was written Sullivan's eclecticism had more fully assimilated those elements of Berlioz, Liszt and Wagner in a work that was self-evidently emulative of 'grand opera' not only in its bolder harmonic and tonal schemes, but also in its processes of continuity, characterisation, orchestration and *role* of the orchestra. Perhaps the greatest irony of *The Golden Legend*, in its co-option of the stage as part of its hybrid aesthetic is that it was more successful as a form of grand-opera-*manquée* than, for all its 157 performances at D'Oyly Carte's English Opera House, was his one *bona fide* grand national opera, *Ivanhoe*. In this paradox surely lies the essence of Sullivan's choral works and what makes them not only a thoroughly distinctive part of the composer's output but also a deeply contrasting sub-genre of the rich fabric of English choral music at the end of the nineteenth century.

## Appendix: Original Sources

The original sources of Sullivan's autograph manuscript full scores of the choral works are located in the following institutions and places:

*The Golden Legend* London, Royal College of Music.  
*The Light of the World* Oxford, Bodleian Library.  
*The Martyr of Antioch* London, Royal Academy of Music.  
*The Prodigal Son* London Private Collection.  
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*Festival Te Deum* Missing, presumed lost.  
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